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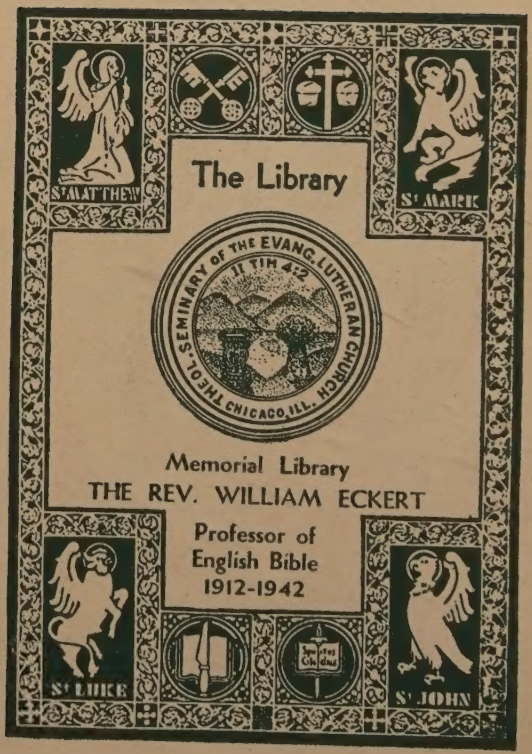
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Some Aspects of Christian Belief

Works by the
Rev. Professor H. R. MACKINTOSH, D.D.

SOME ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

IMMORTALITY AND THE FUTURE

LIFE ON GOD'S PLAN, AND OTHER SERMONS

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SOME ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

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TO

ALEXANDER BEITH MACAULAY

AND

WILLIAM ANDERSON STEPHEN

FRIENDS OF YOUTH AND MANHOOD

1888–1923

Preface

THE essays collected in this volume have all been written during the last ten or fifteen years and treat of subjects in theology which, so far as I can judge, are of something more than ephemeral interest and importance. They do not amount to a systematic exposition of Christian belief, but I should like to think that they are consistent with the faith of the New Testament and with each other.

The first six, of a more doctrinal type, were originally printed in the *Expositor* under the editorship of the late Sir William Robertson Nicoll, to whose never-failing kindness I owe a great debt. The other papers, in the field of philosophical or historical theology, first appeared in various periodicals. I have to thank the editors of *The American Journal of Theology*, *The London Quarterly Review*, *The Pilgrim*, *The Review and Expositor*, *The Contemporary Review*, and *The Church Quarterly Review*, for their permission to reproduce the essays here. All have been carefully revised.

NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH,
October 5, 1923.

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I *History and the Gospel*[1]

THE modern mind, as represented by certain well-known types, is obviously baffled by the claim of the Christian faith to rest on and revolve round events in time. It asks in tones of sincere mystification how eternal truth—the love of God or the fundamental righteousness of things—is, or can be, dependent for its hold upon our intelligence on actual incidents in the past. Is there not even a grossness in the idea? If the Gospel is in itself true, no fusion or coalescence of it with special portions of the time-series can make its truth any less or more. Faith is the soul's adhesion to the living God; why then perplex the simplicity and candour of its attitude by insisting that this adhesion is one which must imply a specifically intellectual posture towards events of history? Why not rather concede that the protest against this is at bottom a religious one, as demanding only that honest men should be encouraged to remain in fellowship with the Church while yet as critics of tradition they suspend judgment on the historicity of alleged occurrences in the first century? Such is the argument in brief. It is remarkable, by the way, that an intensified dislike to implicate religion

[1] *Expositor*, May 1911.

with history should have become thus specially manifest in an age which gives to historical research, and to examination of the principles of evidence, a quite unprecedented proportion of time and energy. The more men know of the past and its human ways, the less, apparently, they will allow it to mean for the present. But while in part this hesitation may be owing to a quickened sense of the obstacles in the path of the historian who aims at certainty, and has to be satisfied with probability, in ultimate origin and title it is not historical at all, but philosophic. Philosophy has always tended to regard historic fact as in the last resort negligible. Truth as such is timeless; from the final point of view the contingencies of the world-process leave it wholly unaffected.

As a general idea, this influential modern prejudice can be traced back to ancient speculation. The Greek view of things gave no place to what we call history or progress.[1] It aimed at dealing solely with the permanent and unchanged essence of the world, and it accepted mathematics as the perfect form of knowledge and as exclusively competent to guide the mind to cognition of τὸ ὄν—that which really is. We must remember that Greek thought set out from the study, not of man,—who is made for history, and is 'a creature of days and years and also of generations,'—but of physical nature.[2] Hence the succession of human events

[1] Cf. W. R. Matthews, *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, p. 59; G. Murray, *Euripides and His Age*, p. 234.

[2] It is however contended by recent writers, like Mr. J. L. Myres

was sternly reduced in significance to the second or third rank ; it was something proper only to the realm of γένεσις, the sphere of change and incalculable variety, which can never satisfy the properly metaphysical interest. No one raised the problem of what progress means, or human history as a whole. No one inquired whether conceivably it has been ' assigned to man to have history for the manner in which he should manifest himself,' and whether, accordingly, in our search for the meaning of the world we are bound not to stop short with principles, truths, laws, because what we seek is given only in facts, events, historical transactions. This, let it be said again, did not present itself as a problem demanding to be faced ; much less would a Greek thinker have dreamt that by this path we arrive (so far as may be) at the secret of the universe.

Yet the Greek mind could not fail utterly to devise its own equivalent for the modern conception of history as a teleological process on the great scale. And this equivalent it found in the idea of a continuous cycle of existence, with alternating periods of evolution and dissolution. All human events, it was held, are repeated time after time, endlessly. Thus for Plato the wheel of generation is eternal, as it had been also apparently for the Pythagoreans ; and in Aristotle we meet with the

and Mr. Ernest Barker, that in early Greece political thought may have led the way, supplying the physicists with vocabulary and leading ideas. I owe this point to Professor John Baillie, of Auburn. Still, even if Socrates was not the first to study Man, neither in his thought nor later do we discover the notion of history proper.

strongly marked principle that the process of the world of generation is a series of transitions without beginning or end. In the same way the Stoics held that the world course is reversible, the original state being perpetually restored. It is a theory, Hatch says, which 'conceived of the universe as analogous to a seed which expands to flower and fruit and withers away, but leaves behind it a similar seed which has a similar life and a similar succession ; so did one universal order spring from its beginning and pass through its appointed period to the end which was like the beginning in that after it all things began anew.'[1] Conceptions of this kind are familiar in Neoplatonism ; they were revived by Herbert Spencer and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century.

A suggestive writer has pointed out that the persistence of this theory means that it is dealing with what appears a serious difficulty for thought. It is hard to grasp 'the reality of the process and admit a real increase and growth in the content or significance of the world. The force of facts compels to the admission that the world really progresses, really contains more than it did of the quality in terms of which the process is formulated, that its Becoming involves a progressive increase in Being. But in spite of the avowal of dynamical principles, the statical tendency to regard the amount of Reality as stationary irresistibly reasserts itself. The actual fact of growth cannot be denied, but its significance may be disputed. And so it is

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 205.

asserted to be merely *apparent*; it is really only the manifestations of the great *Cycle*, which reels off the appointed series of events in precisely the same order for ever and ever. It is therefore a mere illusion to fancy that the total content of the universe changes.'[1] If this is true of ancient philosophy, absorbed in the phenomena of change in nature, it is true in a scarcely less degree of philosophy in modern times, whose first interest is the validity of knowledge, not the development of real existence. For much contemporary thought it is axiomatic that nothing real ever *moves*.[2]

A change here was bound to arrive, even in philosophy, when once ethical considerations had got the upper hand, for ethics apart from the idea of progress is unmeaning; yet too frequently it is forgotten that the badly needed corrective was already being supplied even while the Greek thinkers were at work. It was supplied in the message of the Hebrew prophets. To them the world owes the idea of a real history of things, a progress in time. No one, I suppose, would gravely contend that the Hebrews possessed the peculiar charism of the metaphysician. Saints with them are not speculative men. In view of death, for example, they do not argue that the soul is immortal from its nature; they feel that they are one with

[1] *Riddles of the Sphinx*, p. 209.

[2] But contrast Lotze: 'History should be something more than a translation into time of the eternally complete content of an ordered world; this is a deep and irrepressible demand of our spirit.' (*Metaphysics*, vol. i. p. 156).

God, and that death cannot ever touch those who are folded on the bosom of the Eternal. In spite of their temperament, however, they have contributed certain well-marked elements of truth which must find a place in any sound philosophy. At each point they are seen to be foes of abstraction, bent unwaveringly on that mental attitude of concrete synthesis which insists on the undivided unity of life. In proof we have only to recall their profound sense of the vital conjunction and co-operation of nature and spirit, the oneness of man's experience, the connexion of sin and death; which last is always held to have moral meaning. And it is the same intensely and incorruptibly concrete view which is implicit in the prophetic doctrine that human progress is real because its core and spring are ethical. History is a moral operation. The kingdom of God is coming on the earth. A redemptive purpose is being executed on the grand scale and will throw its results far on into coming ages. The fortunes of Israel are, in the last resort, the fortunes of mankind. If we like we may put this principle into language far enough away from the Old Testament, although natural to moderns, by saying that the conception of reality it implies is not merely statical, but dynamic or kinetic. Reality, in other words, is not *per se* complete, finished, frozen; it is patient of increase and development and marches forward to a goal. It is a time-process, or at all events such a process is embraced within it. It is a scene of change, in which new facts emerge; yet not as the Greeks

held of change which is finally unreal and non-significant. Rather its plastic movement is laden with ultimate and eternal meaning.

Modern thought, as I have said, tends to interpret religion more from the Greek than the Hebrew point of view. It scarcely knows what to do with a genuinely historical religion. Indeed, what has been called by far the strongest blow yet struck at Christianity is the famous word of Lessing: 'Contingent historical truths can never become proof of necessary truths of reason.' Fact is one thing, ideas are another, and between the two there is no inner or essential bond. Curiously enough, it was Lessing himself who did more than all his contemporaries to lift men above the strange and arid prejudice that history is only a wirr-warr of beings, happenings, relations, and to exhibit it as the workshop of life both for nations and persons. The education of mankind, regarding which he spoke many deep words, is in fact an education by way of historical media, moving upward from limited and meagre origins, yet attaining in due time to a heritage defined and enriched through the bygone experiences of man. But this is Lessing at his highest. Elsewhere he lapses as his neighbours do into the abstract rationalism for which religion is little more than a popular metaphysic; the kindergarten method by which the average man rises to the apprehension of high verities more fitly conceived by loftier minds in the timeless modes of speculative argument. And this is, of course, the authentic philosophical tradition.

Spinoza, who strives like Plato to think as mathematically as he can, pronounces nothing to be essential for salvation but knowledge of the Eternal Son of God, *i.e.* of Divine wisdom ; so that although unquestionably it is advantageous to be aware of the historic Christ, yet it is in no way necessary, since the Divine life in man of which He is the symbol has come to abundant manifestation elsewhere. Kant follows in this line, contending that faith in the ideal Christ, in whom God-pleasing manhood is envisaged, is the true faith which saves the soul and makes it inwardly blessed ; and in perfect consistency with this, notwithstanding a willing admission that the ideal took shape and form in the historic Jesus, he does not hesitate to assert that the question whether Jesus' fulfilment of the ideal was complete and sinless is comparatively unimportant. Fichte crowns the series by the declaration that to demand faith in the historic Christ is contrary to the Christian religion. If a man is in fact united to God, his duty is not to be perpetually going back upon the idea of *the way* to such union, but to live in the thing.

The conception of Christianity without Jesus can be traced right down the theological movement of the nineteenth century ; it is never far from the surface when Hegelian or Neo-Hegelian writing touches on religion. We must dissociate the idea of redemption, it is said, from the person of an alleged Redeemer. It is not the way of the Idea to pour its fulness in a single Life. On the contrary, it demands a multiplicity of co-ordinate and mutu-

ally supplementary individual instances for ever rising up anew only to pass away in an infinite and uniform succession. This was altered by more Christian thinkers, like Biedermann, into the less atheistic principle that ideas of the Fatherhood of God and the forgiveness of sins are indeed traceable to the mediation of Jesus, but only as it were by accident. Once they have been planted here, that is to say, they stand by their own weight. Of late, however, the tendency has shown itself to go back to yet more intransigent forms of expression. On the one hand, certain kinds of Modernism, pleading for the independence of faith and history, argue that the true refuge from the dangers of Gospel criticism is the merging of self in the universal Church as the brotherhood of aspiring men. On the other hand we have the controversy afoot in Germany as to the existence of the historic Jesus. Drews' book on the Christ-myths, round which a small literature has gathered rapidly, is no doubt more interesting as a symptom than as a contribution. In other words, whatever its extravagance of statement, it is at least proof that multitudes of people are dissatisfied with the misty outlines and shifting content of the picture of Jesus so far drawn by modern liberal scholarship ; and clear-sighted men like Johannes Weiss concede handsomely that for this dissatisfaction there is substantial ground. But the point for us to note is Drews' remedy for present ills. Fling away the ' chopped straw ' of radicalism, he tells us, and cut loose from history altogether. This persistent clinging to past fact

has been the ruin of Christianity from the first. For the historic Jesus take instead the ideal Christ ; seize and hold the thought that God and man are indistinguishably one—the life of the world God's life, the prolonged sorrow of humanity but the self-redeeming passion of the Absolute—and at once the entanglements and uncertainties of the Church drop from her. Now the dead hand of the past is lifted off. Religion has no more concern with incidents of a bygone time. Such is the latest phase of the long-drawn controversy, and as before its origin and sanctions are philosophic, not religious. They are due this time not to Hegel but to von Hartmann.

What answer can we propose ? What defence can be made of the Gospel as inwoven with history by unbreakable strands of living fibre ? None perhaps that will prevail in the court of pure theory. Truth as it is in Jesus is morally conditioned and must needs be morally appreciated ; and all labour is lost which affects to argue as though it were not so. But if the deepest things in moral and spiritual experience be admitted as not valid merely, but constitutive and all-determining, the case for Jesus is strong indeed.

To begin with, if it be said the Gospel as involved in history must consent to be as relative as other facts of the time-series—that it has to choose, in short, between historicity and finality—the answer is that this is pure and barely concealed assumption, an assumption that will have to be changed if it conflicts with real phenomena. It may well be

bad metaphysics ; it is so, if, as not a few philosophers have begun to think, life is an eternal creation of novelties, a scene not of self-identical persistent objects with unvarying mutual relations but of the incessant uprising of the new and unpredictable. For in that case the fatal presupposition of mechanism as an exhaustive conception of the real vanishes, and the only question remaining is whether the novelty created at a specific point in history was or was not an absolute and all-sufficient Redeemer. Furthermore, it is to be remembered that the religious life of man has always moved upward, not by the influence of abstract conceptions, however rich or versatile, but by the power of great personalities. Each vast movement starts with a man. It rises into strength because an idea and a mind have become fused in one—the thought embodied in a soul, the soul dedicated to the thought and acting only in its service. This is unquestionably how concrete history has proceeded from phase to phase ; it has moved by incessant new beginnings ; and if the axioms of a mechanical psychology break down helplessly before a Paul, a Luther, or a Wesley, acknowledging their inability to explain the original and inscrutable factors these names represent, it is hard to see how they can expect to cope with the incomparable life of Jesus. And to crown all, it has constantly been found that *a priori* notions of relativity are extinguished in Jesus' presence. They are broken by redemption as an experience as of old Samson broke the binding withes. The men who followed Christ in Palestine

and learnt to call Him Lord, those who in every time have felt the sweep of His power and the renewing impetus of His Spirit—all these are somehow aware that in Jesus we touch the supreme moral reality of the universe. They are aware of this ; and unavoidably they have gone on to make unique assertions regarding this unique Person. And whatever be the defects of these assertions in language or conception they at least proclaim the infinitude of Jesus, and the intrinsically hopeless character of all efforts to compute His place who is

> the star to every wandering bark,
> Whose worth 's unknown, although his height be taken.

Drews' reiteration of the old difficulty that nothing past can be vital to a religion which demands a present object, is at first sight more impressive. Yet only at first sight. On these terms life may be spiritually enriched by Jesus Christ as by Socrates, but in no other sense. Ideas or principles may be taken from the Gospel provided we renounce facts. If Jesus is historical, He can only be a dead or dying influence of the past. How often this attempt has been made to put Jesus back firmly into His own age ; to hold Him there as (so to speak) the captive of time's limitations, a figure dimmer always and more distant with the lapse of generations ! Yet one touch of experience breaks the spell. It is found that Jesus is only past while we refuse to think of Him. Let the supreme issues be taken up in moral earnest and at once He steps forward from the

page of history, a tremendous and exacting reality We cannot read His greatest words, be they of command or promise, without feeling, that He is saying these things to us now *unter vier Augen* ; that we are as much face to face with decision for or against Him as Zaccheus or Pilate. He gets home upon our conscience in a manner so final and inevitable—even when we do not wish to have anything to do with Him—that we see and know Him as present to the mind. Like any other reality He can be kept out of consciousness by the withdrawal of attention. But once He is entered, and, having entered, has shown us all things that ever we did, He moves out of the past into the field of immediate knowledge and takes the central place in the soul now and here. It is plain that at this point a living conscience about sin is crucial. Jesus, in short, will permanently be a historical externality to the man who will not admit Him to the moral sense.

It is also in this direction that we find the solution of a further problem. Granted that there was once a Jesus Christ, it may be said, can anything be ascertained regarding Him ? Has not Gospel criticism evacuated our knowledge of all certainty ? And without certainty, what is religious faith ? Surely the record of Jesus' career has been proved to be infected with essentially unverifiable elements. Not even the details of Mark are beyond question. And short of verbal inspiration, the possibility of an influx of later legend cannot be denied. Where shall we draw the line ? I believe that in popular

usage no charge against the New Testament is more common or more effective than this charge that you cannot draw a distinct line between the certain and the uncertain, and that everything, accordingly, is pretty much on one level of untrustworthiness. As is the case so often, the impressiveness of the charge lies in the fact that it represents a significant half-truth. Nothing in the past can be so certain for the historian, *purely as a historian*, as that it will bear the weight of personal religion. History can no more give us a Saviour Christ than science can give us the living God. Even if Christ was the world's Redeemer, and knowable as such, it is not anyhow by way of historical research that He could be known in that character. There are matters, in short, which history by itself is incompetent to treat of; but, as William James puts it, 'a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth, if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.'

That, however, is a preliminary point. The really important thing is that no man is a mere historian, even if he tries to be. For no man is without a conscience—the sense of unconditional and infallible obligation; hence none can be guaranteed against the risk of finding himself in the presence of One who deals with us in ways which we know to be God's ways. It may happen to any man, at any time, given the witness of a living Church, to be inescapably confronted with a Person who convicts him of moral ruin yet offers

him the saving love of God. And if this should happen, he will then know, with a certainty which no history can give or take away, that in this Jesus he has touched and met with God. Here then is the answer to Lessing's objection about contingent truths of history. It is not merely that history is crammed with purpose, and nothing anywhere in it quite contingent ; it is yet more emphatically that to call the fact of Christ contingent has no meaning. Contingent in this sense is peripheral, subordinate, adventitious ; Jesus is central, vital, paramount. So far from being a chance detail of the world, He is the last and highest fact of which moral reason takes cognisance.

But to have found Jesus in history, and to have become assured that in Him we encounter God Himself, are experiences which cannot fail to modify very profoundly our view of history as such. If the supreme Reality has been manifested in a Person who once lived, and—conscience being witness—still lives, it is clear that what happens within 'the bounds of time and place' must function substantively in the plan of being. History, in other words, is not, as philosophy has so often contended, like the screen of a cinematograph, on which we see the moving symbols of independently real things, the symbols themselves being only shadows after all, but no true or abiding contribution to existent fact.[1] On the contrary,

[1] Cf. Professor W. R. Sorley's luminous article on 'Time and Reality' in *Mind* for April 1923. Summing up there his objections to Bosanquet's views on Time, he writes : 'Looking at the whole

it is a domain in which God is bringing reality to pass. Time and the contents of time have no merely negative relation to eternal truth ; rather is supremely valid truth being freely actualised by their instrumentality. The elements of history are plastic and susceptible in the hand of God. For Him the course of the world is no external fate by which He is confronted, and with which He too must somehow come to terms ; its multiplicity and mutation, with the reality of progress and movement these imply, constitute a sphere for creative action that weaves into the cosmic texture the dominating pattern of redemptive love.

History then is such that salvation may come by way of it. In the foregoing pages I have contended that it is bad philosophy to view the realities of history as only so much second-class matter. But religion, I imagine, will go a step further. It will plead that salvation *must* be mediated through history. Humanity can be saved only from within. Even for the Redeemer Himself it was essential that redemption should be accomplished for us, not by a Divine fiat, a great commanding word spoken from heaven, but by a life being lived and a death died within the world and as real parts

process, what does it consist in ? First, infinite to finite, that is, creation, emanation, appearance, or what you will. Then, finite back to infinite ; and this is religion as approved by philosophy. Does not the whole process—in which the finite is pushed out into apparent reality only that it may get pushed back again—seem meaningless ? It would not be meaningless if the finite brought back to its source a value gained from its adventure in time : but this would be to enrich the infinite—a palpable contradiction.'

of the time-series. And this was the lot appointed for Jesus. He too learnt obedience by the things that He suffered ; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

But, apart from such high matters, we can perceive that any redemption which is to be apprehensible by men must be historically conveyed, since it is obviously incidental to human life as such to be constituted by historical relationships. Evil and good alike reach us through the influences of the past ; through persons who, whether by heredity or by example, have co-operated in moulding us ; and for the supreme forces of religion also, if they are to possess the world, it will be natural and necessary to approach and capture the souls of men in ways similarly concrete. Now this actualisation of redemption within the phenomenal order is possible for God. Just because He is transcendent it is possible for Him to appear in time in the form of one finite spirit, while yet not losing Himself—like von Hartmann's unhappy Absolute—in the fatal and debasing labyrinth of multiplicity. Creation was built on lines such as to admit of the influx of vast redemptive forces one day to be liberated by the Divine love. In this basal sense all must recognise the Lutheran axiom *finitum capax infiniti*—the finite can receive and assimilate Infinitude. And since ideas in themselves are impotent, the Infinite One came personally as a Saviour. Abstract humanity may be saved by abstract conceptions, real men and women only

by a concrete Life. Love is of God, therefore God must live beside us that His love and its sacrifice may be known to created spirits and may win back their love. So Browning thought of it :

> What lacks then of perfection fit for God,
> But just the instance which this tale affords
> Of love without a limit? So is strength,
> So is intelligence; let love be so,
> Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
> Then is the tale true and God shows complete.

The foregoing argument has a close bearing on the doctrine of Atonement ; a brief note on that subject, therefore, may be added here. If history be fully real, it must figure concretely and decisively in the relations of God and man. Now what is known as the moral theory of Atonement contains elements of profound truth, in that it contemplates Christ as the gift and act of God Himself and lifts the problem clean above all categories of law and barter by its accentuation of God's free grace, who had no need to be induced to love us, but gave His only-begotten Son out of a love as old and uncreated as His being. All this, fortunately, is the common property of all Christian theories.

Yet the religion of the New Testament provides, as it seems to me, a deeper and more solemn undertone. It conveys the truth, dimly yet significantly, that Jesus' life and death represent not a mere disclosure of God's relation to the sinful, but a change in it. It was indeed a revelation, but a revelation contributing to the reality it revealed.

To recall our former illustration, history in this central tract of it is no mere lantern-screen on which are thrown pictures of independently real fact ; rather it is the workshop and laboratory in which fact itself comes to be. In virtue of something which has happened, something which would not have happened apart from Jesus, sinners now have God on their side in a new way. His judgment on sin has been manifested once and for ever ; but it has been manifested in the actualities of the phenomenal series, and, by its very occurrence, has produced a new situation between the Father and His wandering children.[1]

So that we are after all led back to the fundamental problem : Is the relation of God to man of a static kind as immutable and intrinsic as the ratio holding between two given numbers, or is it interpretable in genuinely personal categories ; susceptible, therefore, of change, growth, enrichment, consummation ? Has the Cross any causal bearing —not on the originative and fontal love of God, but—on His present gracious attitude to the guilty ? Or shall we apply also at this point the monistic principle that nothing real ever moves, that all happenings are *ipso facto* appearance, not reality ? To me it seems that if history is the fruitful sphere and nidus of being ; if it is this, and not merely an earthly representation and picturing of eternal truths—of validities, that is, which hold good

[1] On the significance of this for missionary endeavour, see Mr. Edwyn Bevan's article in the *International Review of Missions* for July 1919.

irrespectively of all that may *become* in time and space—then we are obliged to think of salvation as deriving reality, acquiring substantial and effective existence, through concrete events of time. Christ, that is, does more than unveil a relation already posited by the very definition of Divinity and Humanity; He once for all develops a new relation, at a great cost. True, this argument is worthless if God is not in fact antagonistic to sin; if, because He is love unspeakable, He cannot be wrath as well. But to say so is to disregard the voice of the instructed Christian conscience, which tells us plainly that we question God's anger at sin only because we are so little angry at it ourselves. And if the wrath of God be a dread reality, not as a quasi-human passion, but as the reaction of pure holiness against moral evil, then it is possible to hold that right had to be done by that morality which is, as Butler puts it, 'the nature of things,' and that by His life and death Jesus Christ achieved this great task. There is a homage due to the righteous will of God, which we cannot render of ourselves, but which in the acts and endurances of an historic life He rendered for us. There was a divinely produced increase in the content and significance of the world. And all this is possible, ultimately, because God is the God of history, who in Jesus makes a new start in His connexion with the sinful, by altering and rectifying, in ethical and spontaneous ways, the imperfect relationship which had previously obtained.

II *Is God Knowable?*[1]

Under this familiar heading I wish to discuss not so much the philosophical problems it may suggest, as the scope and nature of the knowledge of God which we obtain through faith. How far does the Christian's believing knowledge of God reach? We assume it to be a genuine knowledge; the statement 'God is love' is true of reality beyond and other than our minds, and is not less true although neither we nor others are for the time being attending to it. It affirms an objective fact which cognition accepts as given but does not create. Religious truth is apprehensible under conditions that in some ways differ from those which enable men to grasp the truths of science, but in either case it is *truth* we are talking of. There have been writers who maintained that the Beautiful is one of man's self-preservative fictions, that in fact beauty is not in things but in the contemplating mind, at least so far as concerns animate nature. This no doubt is wrong, but it has been argued by people whose aesthetic sensibilities were keen. Artists themselves, they were content to say that the beauty and sublimity of natural objects are not qualities of things as they are, but subjective emotions in the bystander. But in religion it is

[1] *Expositor*, November 1921.

different. You do not find Christian believers adopting the position that God, or His forgiveness of sins, or the reality of the soul are subjective imaginings ; for them the truth of the utterances of the religious consciousness, as of the moral, is a question of life and death.

But is this knowledge of God, whose truth we take for granted, limited or unlimited in scope ? Is it complete or partial ? And if there is that in God of which, even as Christians, we remain profoundly ignorant, what guarantee can be given that this hidden and outlying region of His nature may not be fatally incongruous with what has been revealed ? In a word, is our knowledge of God through Christ, incomplete as it may be, wholly conclusive ?

It is interesting to note that the teaching of the New Testament on the point is superficially ambiguous. Thus in one place St. Paul repeats the ancient question : ' Who hath known the mind of the Lord ? ' and immediately answers himself with the triumphant words : ' We have the mind of Christ.' But significantly enough the same question recurs, in the eleventh chapter of Romans, with a new accent. ' How unsearchable,' he writes, ' are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? ' What is uppermost here is agnosticism rather than the confidence of trustful insight. Or again, St. John makes the striking claim : ' Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know,' which recalls the reported promise of Christ, before His departure, concerning the Spirit : ' He shall teach you all

things.' Yet St. Paul can say : ' We know in part.' It almost seems as if the New Testament itself were in two minds on the subject, now affirming our real knowledge of God and divine things, now calling it in question. ' To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge '—this balancing of insight with ignorance recurs over and over. We know, yet we do not know. What is the upshot of it all ? How far does our believing acquaintance with the Divine nature extend ?

Our possession of any complete knowledge of God is rendered highly improbable, to say the least, by our lack of a complete knowledge of ourselves. In great measure we are a mystery to our own minds, and the psychology of the unconscious or subliminal heightens this impression. Of other men we know still less. Shadows too are cast on God and His methods from various quarters : the trials of good men, the crowding tragedies of history, the swaying conflict of higher and lower within ourselves. These things do not encourage the claim of omniscience.

In addition, many difficulties flow from the symbolical or analogical character of human thinking. Our thought of necessity is coloured from end to end by sense-experience ; may not this so distort our views of Deity that they become more false than true ? Are we entitled to carry over into descriptions of God features which obviously have their origin in the experience of an embodied spirit—not to speak of attributes, such as eternity and omnipresence, which derive much of their meaning

from the simple negation of spatial and temporal limits? Even the term 'person' as applied to God, is notoriously subject to criticism. 'Father' is admittedly a symbol, and Arius went wrong because he took it literally. If we sum up these considerations, what do they amount to? How far can the Christian mind count on really knowing the inner being of God?

The difficulty that our thoughts of God are unavoidably symbolic may be dealt with in three ways. In the first place, it might be held that our ideas, sense-born as they may be, are yet quite exact, and convey a wholly accurate and precise knowledge of the Divine nature. Or, after a regretful admission that symbolic thought can never be more than approximately correct, it may be argued that the best plan is to cut out the symbolic element relentlessly and make the attempt to describe God in purely abstract terms. Or once more, you may hold that in religious symbols there is nothing to be ashamed of, and that if only the symbols used are the worthiest human experience can furnish, it is precisely by means of them, with all their inadequacy from the intellectual point of view, that we receive true and saving impressions of God. On reflection, I think, it will prove that it is the last of these three suggestions which best fits the genius of Christian faith.

I

The first contention is that symbolic thinking in religion calls for no defence inasmuch as it gives an

exact and altogether satisfactory representation of the Divine reality. Probably its keenest advocates will only press this view with reservations. No one takes a phrase like 'the finger of God' literally. The law of Israel forbade pictures or images of God, but Hebrew religious poetry took its revenge in the most daring imaginative representations of the Divine being and action; yet it is quite certain psalmists and prophets would have listened with amazement to the plea that passages like the following were exactly true: 'Stir up Thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord' (Ps. xxxv. 23), or 'I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth' (Isa. li. 16). It is questionable whether any modern theologian would venture to interpret the name 'Father' or 'Son,' as applied to the distinctions in the Godhead, with such verbal precision as to consider himself justified in drawing explicit inferences from the name itself, the inference, for example, that the Godhead is on a par with a human family. Even the conception 'personality,' though the best available, is not to be transferred without alteration from our own life. In us personality has a beginning; it has growth and may have decay; it is manifested through a body: but these things no one will predicate of God just as they stand. No doubt when we say 'God is love' the symbolic element appears to be ready to vanish away; yet 'love' is taken from a human emotion

which indisputably in some respects is worthy to be ascribed to God, but in other respects must be denied, in so far as 'love' in earthly life connotes passion or turbulent agitation such as is inconsistent with the absolute Divine freedom. Thus our loftiest notions come short. To call them exact would be to wrong the spirit of religion, for the religious mind, as it rises in the scale, becomes ever more deeply aware that a God whom we could perfectly measure and comprehend would be wholly unequal to our need. Such a God, deprived of every unsearchable and ineffable quality, and reduced to the limits of our day-by-day conceptions, would no longer be the infinite and exalted One before whom we bow in lowly worship, but an idol built to suit our fancies, controlled by our wayward and mistaken desires, apt to incorporate our dubious and self-satisfied ideals. We might well shrink from the thought that we could 'find out the Almighty unto perfection,' for in that case reverence would promptly die and the boundless cravings of the heart would once for all be condemned to unfulfilment. As Goethe has expressed it, *Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst.* Thus it is of cardinal importance for faith itself that the element in the idea of Divinity which breaks through language and escapes should never be forgotten. The name 'God' must bring us to our knees in awe and wonder, and it has been well said by Otto that the man who does not understand the words put on Abraham's lips, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, *who am but dust*

and ashes,' is a stranger to the inmost meaning of religion.[1]

It is of course true that the ideas we form of great men, of famous religious heroes and leaders of the past, are themselves inexact and approximate. But the difference between the two cases is clear. Our conceptions of Luther, Wesley, Chalmers, Lincoln, are all but certainly idealised. It is not that these great figures were not great and good, but that the cool historian, studying the sources impartially, would undoubtedly inform us that we had failed to picture them to ourselves as they really were—'warts and all,' in Cromwell's phrase. To say this is not cynicism but historical conscience. They did possess the attributes of excellence and courage we ordinarily ascribe to them, but in every case—one Name excepted—the great men of history exhibited, beside these qualities, other defects and weaknesses which later idealisation has obliterated. They themselves, we may be certain, would have been the first to protest with indignant and amused surprise, or perhaps with a rather sad smile, against the poetic perfection in which their character has been dressed. It is otherwise with the thoughts we form of Deity.

[1] Christianity is the perfect religion not because it extrudes from its conception of God this characteristic of the awe-inspiring One, before whom the creature is as nothing, but because it unites it completely with the ethical attributes, in their loftiest form, of love and goodness. 'In thus mingling the revealed with the dimly-divined unrevealed, the highest love with the awful ὀργή of Deity in the Cross, Christian feeling has made the most vital of all applications of the category of the Holy' (Otto, *Das Heilige*, p. 203).

These thoughts and pictures, we have seen, are in no sense precise copies of the Divine fact ; they are inadequate, however, not because they are too good for the reality but because they are not good enough. We have added to them subjective elements ; the broken mirror of imagination has defaced the higher object ; but the effect has been not to glorify an imperfect reality but to darken and distort the perfection of God. We need never fear that our words have said too much or climbed too far. 'As the heavens are high above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'

II

The second proposal is to exclude rigorously from our thought of God all those figurative elements which, with whatever psychological inevitability, have been carried over from human life. For if these conceptual instruments are as defective as we have found them to be, why should they any longer be used ? Let us rather renounce altogether the practice of thinking about God in terms derived from the concrete facts of experience. It is in abstract terms alone that He can be conceived as He really is, in His transcendence and absoluteness. This is the policy commended by writers of the right wing of Hegelianism, best exemplified in Biedermann of Zürich. He reaches what he describes as 'the pure and only adequate concept of Absolute Spirit' by discarding, one after the other, not merely the more distinctly emblematic ingredients of religious thought, but even such

predicates as will, knowledge, and feeling. These are human and therefore cannot be Divine. To say that God wills or knows or feels is so earthly as to defeat its own purpose.

Behind this theory we seem to discern the features of an old but ever-renewed fallacy. This is the view that uneducated people and those who speak to them on religious topics have unfortunately no choice but to employ a certain picture language in which God is set forth by means of carnal parables and analogies, whereas the select circle of the philosophically minded is privileged to use the abstract and scientific speech of pure knowledge. As one writer points out, this is an error which appears in other fields. 'Many a scientific man imagines that when, convinced by investigation, he has stated that light consists in vibrations of the ether, the full and exact knowledge of what light really is is now in his possession; but while he certainly has grasped the object of his study more correctly than the ignorant layman could, and has risen superior to the ordinary delusions of sense, after all he has seen the object only as it appears to his scientifically equipped vision, and has unwittingly made additions of his own to what he sees, thereby shaping and colouring his idea of it.' And so with the theologian. He cannot think with anything but a human mind, and the human mind uses, it will always use, imaginative thought-forms. Thus when Biedermann proceeds to formulate his own definition of God, it turns out to be expressed in language as really, though not per-

haps quite so obviously, pictorial in quality, as redolent of sense-born imagery, as any he had previously rejected. When, for example, instead of speaking of God's 'consciousness,' which he regards as a term unduly human, he speaks of His *Insichsein*, as though this special word represented the language of pure thought, he has really sunk, not risen in the scale of expression. For with all its defects, 'consciousness' is a spiritual or mental word, and what it means we know to some extent, but *Insichsein*, or 'being-in-self,' is a spatial term properly, and what it suggests of spiritual meaning is vague and indeterminate. The path to which Biedermann mistakenly invites us is, if followed out to its logical termination, the path of pure negativity which at last plunges down into a blank, featureless Absolute devoid of all positive or recognisable attributes and therefore not really capable of description; this we are to call blindly, God. Now exactly this was a point which non-Christian mysticism had reached of itself, as the furthest limit of human apprehension; and it is very odd, to say the least, that the Christian idea of God, now that Jesus has been here, should simply coincide with the results attained by Greek and Indian sages, and should not really offer anything that is new. We are once more driven to the confession that every religious idea formed even by the most persistently critical philosopher represents the Divine in symbolic forms of intuition, borrowed from the phenomena of time and space. Grace and freedom are conceived under the figure of the

confluence of two finite forces; revelation and piety are conceived as though they were two different facts, separated by an interval of time. We do not escape from this difficulty by restricting our choice of conceptions to the field of inward spiritual experience. There, too, the only categories we can find are inadequate, and we fall back by instinct, which is really guided by a deeper reason, into pictures and parables.

III

Let us now turn to the third method. It recommends us frankly to concede that religious thinking must always remain imaginative and pictorial, therefore inexact from the critical point of view, and yet to hold that by means of these very symbolic media we have a true and satisfying knowledge of God. There can be no doubt at all that, alone of the three, this suggestion is in harmony with the inner character of Christian faith. To put the case briefly: if we apply the principle that the cause is known through its effects, we may rightly describe the Power confronting us in Jesus Christ as the Power of sovereign holy Love. To those who have felt this Power it is the most real thing in the universe; indeed, the standard and measure of all reality and value. It is highest in the highest sphere of all spheres known to us; it is a Personal Life, intent on fellowship with man; for the irreducible minimum of Christian faith may be said to be this, that a world with Jesus in it is a world with a great and loving God over it. Henceforward

the name of God is not simply a mystery ; it is a significant name, the content of which, though set in pictorial forms, we have constraining reason to regard as trans-subjectively true. Insoluble problems, it is still admitted, gather round the *degree* of adequacy with which the ideas of faith transcribe the facts of God's being, thus presented in Jesus ; but the abiding sense we have of their partial inadequacy no more necessitates the negation of their truth, so far as they go, than the same kind of inadequacy in our conception of the character and inner experience of a friend compels us to regard him as a subjective illusion. We have a right to go on believing that, as confronted and evoked by Jesus Christ, faith does grasp the side of God's being which is turned towards men. If a symbolic colour is fatal to religious knowledge, it is equally fatal to the real insight of ethics, history, and common life.

The insight of faith, however, is in one sense quite fragmentary. Nor can any one so well afford to confess this as a Christian. Our grasp of the Father certifies to us, indeed, the fact of Providence, but the method or process of providential guidance is as much hidden from the Christian as from others. We cannot look on at God's operations through His eyes ; we cannot see the details of His purpose in the world from the inner side, or as He sees them. Theoretical teleology can never be for us anything more than a matter of suggestion ; for, until we know the whole, the function of the part within the whole remains a

matter of hypothesis ; and there is nothing in the Gospel itself to alter this.

None the less, the full assurance of faith is to the effect that, in spite of our ignorance of the inner processes, to call them so, of the Divine mind, as well as of the detailed actualisation of the Divine purpose in history, we do actually know God as He is. And this assurance includes, as part of itself, the further certainty that the innermost secret of God's being—that in God by virtue of which He *is* God—lies in what has been disclosed to us in Jesus, not in the still veiled region which, in this life at all events, is inaccessible and by its very nature cut off from our present knowledge ; and that this veiled region contains nothing which could impair or cancel the revelations of the known. When St. John wrote, ' No man hath seen God at any time,' he passed judgment on the curiosity that would pry into the life of Him ' who dwells in light that none can approach ' ; when he added, ' the only-begotten Son, who is in the Father's bosom, hath brought Him out to view,' he affirmed the reality and sufficiency of faith's apprehension of God. The Christian, ignorant as he may be of much concerning God, is only beginning the process of spiritual knowledge, so to speak, from the other end ; sure of the character and mind of the Father, he is working outward from this centre, not inwards from without. Once the main question has been settled for ever, subordinate problems, painful as they may be, can be borne calmly. To quote Illingworth's fine parallel : ' The

great politician, or philosopher, or poet, is known to the outer world by the work that he has done ; but his child, his wife, his friend, who know the human heart within him, are content in that great knowledge to leave all else alone.'

Thus it is not the case that, by confessing the logically inadequate character of religious ideas, we leave Christian faith an open tumbling-ground for whimsies. There is no need to fear lest the acknowledgment of a region in God beyond all human thought should place us at the mercy of every sort of superstition, breaking in casually from the beyond, as though the unsurveyed domain might be peopled with shapes of fear and darkness. Doubts, after all, can never cancel knowledge. We have met in Christ a God whom we can trust without reserve ; with the Reformers, we know ' no other God than the God who has manifested Himself in the historical Christ, and made us see in the miracle of faith that He is our salvation.' That complete trust is qualitatively perfect though not quantitatively synoptic ; it fixes a principle, though from where we stand we cannot see far or wide enough to apply the principle in detail to each element in the life of God. The admission that there might be in God certain moral characteristics at variance with sovereign Love would not merely plant irrational dualism at the heart of the moral order ; it would kill that confidence in Jesus through which our mind has opened to faith in the Father.

But if as Christians we possess a spiritually

adequate knowledge of God, in the strength of which we live, is it possible to find fit words for this knowledge ; such words or expressions, that is, as will truthfully convey it to other minds ? Can we communicate what we know ? We can, provided the symbols with which our words are charged be drawn only from the purest and loftiest range of human experience. In other words, they must be derivable from those fields of life where personality is manifested most worthily. Not from the domain of law or commerce, but from social and family life at their highest. The same symbol is not everywhere useful. ' There are parts of the world,' it has been noted, ' where the whole set of ideas which we associate with the ' Lamb of God ' can make no appeal, because the sheep is a savage animal.' The Christian name for God is ' Father,' and that it should be so is no accident. For while the name is a symbol after all and may often have called up a mental image far too human to be true, while inferences based directly on a metaphor and developed with ruthless logic have in the past done much to discredit theology, yet in this case two countervailing considerations may be pled. In the first place, by discarding the term ' Father,' we should not gain in adequacy, but lose. To affirm the Fatherhood of God may be unsatisfactory or meaningless from the point of view of ontology, but to deny it, as Christians are convinced, is to diverge immensely further from the truth. Instead of rising to that which is ethically and spiritually superior, the mind sinks inevitably to

something lower, to the pantheistic and sub-personal. And secondly, it cannot be forgotten that the New Testament defines this Fatherhood in a quite concrete manner ; it defines it as relative to the experience of Jesus Christ. God, it teaches, is such a Father as is mirrored in Jesus' mind. Hence, while in contemplating the Fatherhood of God we should of course concede that hope and fear, joy and pain, perplexity and aspiration are not to be ascribed to God in the form they assume in the experience of a father on earth—indeed, in some of these instances, are not to be ascribed to God at all—yet we do contend, with the revelation given through Christ on our side, that the love, the care, the wisdom, the spirit of self-sacrifice which are imperfectly revealed in earthly fatherhood, exist in utter perfection in the Eternal. Our ideas, our symbols, are indeed unworthy of their object ; the form is incurably unequal to the matter ; we have the treasure in earthen vessels. Yet while the vessels are earthen, they convey treasure to the needy, and through them the life and power of God reach and save us.

This means that to a great extent the business of theology consists in the criticism of religious symbols. It is far from being a matter of indifference which pictures or images men use to set forth the supersensible and transcendent. In the vocabulary of the believing there exist at every stage certain pictorial representations of God and His action which are long past their best and have yielded all the service to Christian thought of which

they are capable. It is high time to place them on the retired list, or at all events to relegate them to strictly subordinate functions. Every one knows, for example, that a useful classification of theories of the Atonement might be formed according to the kind of symbol which each type of theory employs, and that there are numerous elements in the military, or the legal, or the commercial theories of the past with which the Christian mind will not work any more. It is difficult to overestimate the aid—often most unwillingly accepted—given to Christian theology by the searching strictures passed on such religious symbols by the heretic and the sceptic. They have compelled the Church to do more efficiently its task of ever-renewed inspection and review. They have called attention to the moral inconsistency of divergent symbols or to the impossibility of taking mere symbols as the basis of argument, for too often in the history of doctrine tempting figures have been pressed in the most inconsiderate fashion by a mode of thought which is full of delusions. In this matter, theology is called to be a conscience to the Church. Its work is not to purge religious thought of symbol—this must always fail—but to waken men to the fact that their ideas about God *are* really symbolic and hence perpetually in need of being tested afresh by experience and reflection ; and, in addition, to re-examine current figures in the light of Jesus' revelation of God. This perennial duty to elevate and refine the conceptions which piety makes use of is itself a salutary reminder that our

knowledge of God, our insight into His life, is but in part.

In discharging this critical task, theology, it would seem, is bound to obey two rules or principles. In the first place, every figure or expression must be eliminated which is calculated to suggest a thought of God unlike Jesus Christ. There is no need to say that every true idea about God must be derivable from Christ ; everything essential is secured if we say that no idea can be admitted which is out of harmony with Him. And again, while Christian men undoubtedly are free to strike out such new images or symbols as in their considered judgment will better serve to bring home the Christian message to their own time, the new symbolism must be vitally continuous with the old. Amidst changing terminologies there must remain a kernel or nucleus of *meaning* which does not change, but preserves and perpetuates the historic self-identity of Christian faith. This innermost core, as it were, of description can be mediated best of all by the symbol of Fatherhood, under the strong safeguards against misunderstanding of the name which are furnished by the Gospels. God is the Father of Jesus Christ our Lord, and our Father through Him.

III *The Conception of a Finite God*[1]

In recent years theology has become more than usually familiar with the notion of a finite or growing Deity. It is a thought which has always hovered round the periphery of Christian speculation, making spasmodic efforts to reach the centre ; and for certain minds the theistic perplexities of the war have probably invested it with a fresh attractiveness. Can God rightly be called infinite or omnipotent when such enormities as the recent conflict occur in His universe ? Easier by far, surely, to believe that He is still grappling with a task too great for Him, though eventually His increasing power and knowledge will master it. He in fact is working out a history just like ourselves. He is the supreme Spirit, yet an individual inside the scheme of things, and thus far the scheme of things as a whole has more or less frustrated His efforts. But it is faith to hold that time will bring equality between task and power, even if consistency appears to suggest that at each point the task also will have grown and presumably a certain Divine inadequacy will still exist.

We must not allow ourselves to be so prejudiced by the obvious dissimilarity between this and the Biblical conception of God as to imagine that the

[1] *Expositor*, November 1918.

advocates of Divine finitude are not handling real problems. In point of fact they are working at the crux of all apologetic. It has never ceased to be a question how a perfect God can rule so imperfect a world. And this means, what is actually the case, that the problem is by no means so novel as has been thought; it also means that instructed thinkers have, at various times, in the endeavour to reconcile the theoretical difficulties of the case with the demands of religious faith, investigated possible solutions which in principle are nearly identical with some of those now placed before us with exaggerated claims to originality. Still, the past never quite repeats itself. A new theology is not merely the re-thinking of an old problem; it is the emergence of a problem new in form, and even partly in scope.

We have first to elucidate the sense of the equivocal adjective 'finite' when applied to God. We shall try to indicate the truth denoted by it and next inquire whether this truth does or does not veto the ascription to God of the epithet 'infinite' in the carefully guarded meaning which trained theologians have inclined to place on the word.

A 'finite' God, so far as I can see, is a rather misleading way of putting the fact that God, at all events for Christian thought, is not identical with the All of things. He is not the Absolute, if by Absolute we mean the Whole of being or the Universe. Unless the immediate certainties of the religious consciousness are to be bowed out of court, we start with the position that man is not a piece

of God, but God and selves co-exist within the sphere of reality. Man, in short, is not part of a Whole in which all finites blend as absorbed elements, and if the Whole is the equivalent of all real existence, then the Whole is not God as Christians employ the term. All epigrams, it has been said, bear their falsehood on their face ; and the reported dictum of an eminent British philosopher to the effect that the word ' mind ' should never be used in the plural except by way of metaphor is a good instance in point. If this may be taken as an example of the greater ' concreteness ' reached by advanced metaphysics, it will be harder than ever to wean intelligent people from common sense.

God, then, for the religious man, is not all-inclusive in the sense that ultimately there is one, and only one, experience. How indeed we should know enough of what ' experience ' means to predicate it of God unless our own thought and feeling formed a real illustration of it, it is hard to understand. In a loose way, doubtless, God may be said to include Nature, since Nature is part of His sphere ; yet by very definition Nature is morally insusceptible of God, and it is only by virtue of an incurably spatial fashion of thought that we insist on talking as if God contained and pervaded the physical cosmos as the sea pervades and contains a sponge. Moreover, it is not a convincing view that God includes man as a constituent part of Himself in such wise that man and He are equally, or in some at least partially identical

way, dependent on each other. According to faith, man is derived from God and wholly dependent on God, but he is not one and the same with God as being only a phase or aspect of the Divine life. Vital religious experiences seem to make any such thorough-going identification impossible. One of these is contrition. We cannot safely overlook the sense of separation from God, of moral distance, apart from which repentance can neither be felt nor interpreted ; and the fact that in what the New Testament calls ' repentance unto life ' this is by no means incongruous with a concomitant awareness of union with the forgiving Father, does not in the least alter the case. In the experience of devout fellowship, moreover, duality as between God and man is implied no less centrally than in penitence itself. As it has been expressed by Professor Pringle-Pattison, ' it takes two to love and to be loved, two to worship and to be worshipped.' Reciprocity disappears when the two terms of relation fall into each other.

Now everything we can truly say about the reality of the individual is so far proof of the ' conditionedness ' of God. And those thinkers whom the spatial character of the expression does not deter from characterising God as all-inclusive must not object when other people hold that some human experiences—for example, my sinful desires—are outside of God. What more than anything else has led to the equation of God with the Universe, or at any rate with a universal Experience beyond which nothing falls, is the habit of philosophising

on the purely logical in abstraction from the moral plane. Not infrequently God is really conceived of as the *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, of which finite spirits are the foci, or even just the logical instances. And, as it has been put, 'if God is what we ordinarily mean by a logical Universal, then, of course, it follows that He has no existence except in the particulars.' The real question for Theism, consequently, comes to be: Is there, or is there not, a supreme self-conscious Spirit which is *other than* the finite centres? The phrase 'other than,' I feel, involves everything which people who speak of a 'finite' Deity are trying to say. They are rightly insisting that the moral experience of individuality is not to be sacrificed to an abstract generalisation. Undoubtedly they have chosen a misleading term, and one that occasions more error than it cures; but their drift is clear enough. In short, if the term 'Absolute' is to be employed, and if, as apparently is the case, it ought to signify the All of being, it must be definitely used to denote God and the world taken together in their living and essential correlativity. This will ensure justice being done to the human self, with its consciousness at once of dependence and independence. To any one convinced that God is a self it will always be evident that 'to suppose a coincidence or literal identification of several selves, as the doctrine of a Universal Self demands, is even more transparently self-contradictory than that two bodies should occupy the same space!'[1]

[1] Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, pp. 389-390, n. 3.

A second deduction may be drawn from the moral implicates of Theism. The theory of a 'finite' God indicates, with whatever infelicity, that the Divine action is conditioned by intellectual and moral necessities. Theology has usually understood this not so much as a limitation of the Divine power as rather an explanation of its one possible meaning. It would be difficult to unearth a theologian accustomed to teach that God can literally do anything capable of being stated (I do not say *thought*, for it is an interesting question whether such combinations can really be thought), like making two contradictory propositions both true at once, causing the past to be the future, or forcing one man to love another. Trained thinkers have no scruple in (not conceding) but asserting that these are things God cannot do, because they cannot possibly be done. In recent times, theology has grown specially keen to ethicise the notion of omnipotence. The power of God, it is held, is exerted in a moral world and under moral conditions. Suppose a man to pray long and exclusively for fame and money, and suppose his wishes to be granted, shall we say God is non-omnipotent because in these circumstances He cannot make the man Christlike? Or because He cannot forgive the impenitent? Or because He so rules the world that no one becomes noble without pain? Would He be almighty in the proper sense if He could grant the vision of Himself equally to the pure and the impure? When I want a true instance of omnipotence, as a morally qualified attribute, I survey the

power by which He turned the death of Jesus—that sin of sins—to the redemption of the world. Here is real content for the idea emphatically reaffirmed by our Lord : ' With God all things are possible.' He who can thus sovereignly use the Cross is almighty.

It is not irrelevant to remind ourselves at this point that the chief antagonist of the new theory is not, as participants in the controversy seem at times to think, traditional theology, but the religious faith of the Bible, and specially of Jesus. So far from questioning Old Testament teaching as to the sublimity and omnipotence of God, Jesus, if possible, laid on it a deeper stress.

But it will be said : You object to finite as a misleading predicate of God ; do you then insist that He is infinite ? On this two remarks may be in place. And first, ' infinite ' is by no means one of those simple, manageable conceptions which we perfectly comprehend ; and even where for want of a better we do use it, we yet may be conscious of various perplexities. There are perplexities in its application to Time no less than to God, as every reader of Kant knows to his cost. An endless series of moments backwards or forwards is just as unthinkable as a series which stops. To handle this adjective in a light-hearted fashion, then, may be a sign of nothing except shallowness. It is not the case that we stand ready with this predicate in hand, able to feel all round it, and merely in doubt whether or not we shall apply it to God ; we assert it of objects as to which all we may

be certain of is that we cannot call them finite. It is in short (so far) a negative rather than a positive conception. We throw out our minds by means of it at an object which transcends our faculty of thought. But we never understand it as we do the word finite. If I say that God's knowledge is infinite, I do not mean that I can go over His knowledge and point out in detail the qualities in virtue of which it merits this description; the word is but a shorthand expression of the belief that there is nothing knowable which God does not know. But precisely how much is knowable we are unable to say, and the difficulties which crowd upon us at this point may be surmised from what the Schoolmen wrote concerning the *scientia media* of God.

The second remark is that in the above-mentioned sense, which denies real limitations other than those imposed by the rational and moral nature of things, some equivalent of 'infinite' is predicated of God by every theist. Thus, in a recent article on the theistic implications of Bergson's philosophy,[1] Professor F. H. Foster, while rejecting 'infinitude in the old conception of that term,' yet concedes that God must be thought of as 'immeasurably great,' and a few lines lower down speaks of 'the illimitability of His power.'[2] If we assume, as we are entitled to do, that Professor Foster has no wish

[1] In the *American Journal of Theology* for April 1918, pp. 274-299.

[2] Professor A. E. Taylor aptly observes that 'the believers in a "finite God" have always stipulated that the limits of their Deity's knowledge or power shall be so widely drawn as to leave Him in a position to act as an overruling Providence to the rest of us.'

to resuscitate the once prevalent distinction between God in Himself and God as known by us—in short, the old doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, which, particularly in its moral applications, brought so much discredit on theology—my own belief is that, provided always we bear in mind the explanations of the Divine omnipotence given by the best theology, there is little difference between Professor Foster's real point and the familiar contention of careful thinkers. Both are bent on saying that God is greater than we could ask or think. But when Professor Foster adds that 'what we demand is a doctrine of God's greatness large *enough* to give us ground for a personal and individual trust in Him,' he has scarcely chosen a happy form of words to represent the 'immeasurable' demand actually made by the faith of the single soul, as revealed in the New Testament. There, invariably, all things are in God's power, and it is expressly declared that nothing, not death nor life nor things present nor things to come, can separate us from Him. I cannot think that—metaphysics apart—this vital mood is adequately reproduced in the statement that God need not be 'infinitely capable in order to meet my individual needs, but only sufficiently.' In the future theology which is to pierce beneath the exterior of life to the depths of the soul, we must surely find some better way than this of saying that faith—and for that matter reason—proclaims God's power to be commensurate with the possibilities of all created being. The religious thought

of omnipotence at its highest is put finely in the verse of Wesley's hymn :

> And whatsoe'er thou wilt
> Thou dost, O King of kings;
> What thine unerring wisdom chose,
> Thy power to being brings.

Let us now turn to another aspect of our theme, the conception of a 'growing' God. In a broad sense we may call this the Divine finitude as related to time. Here, too, Professor Foster will supply an emphatic formulation, stated with great force and persuasive skill, of the changes desired in traditional views. Starting with Bergson's idea of the Vital Impulse as 'an upward moving force, imperfect in power, uncertain as to methods, struggling toward a great end, itself enlarging as it goes,' he confronts the issue openly by asking, 'How can God possibly be conceived of as ever progressing, enlarging, adding new degrees of strength and new attributes?' To this daunting inquiry [1] he answers that, just as an artist becomes a better artist by painting, by creating what is beautiful, so 'God, if He creates, also cannot be static, but grows.' The idea is put even more plainly in a later passage. 'If our human strength thus increases, why should it not be so with God's? As He acts why should He not think? And as He progresses in action from the building of a snail to the building of a man why should not His thoughts

[1] The best that can be said for it will perhaps be found in Sir Henry Jones's *A Faith that Inquires*, p. 273 f.

progress ? That is, why should He not think of things He had not thought of ? And why should not His purposes progress ? Why not, therefore, His power ? '[1] And again : ' God, in doing, in exercising His powers for the good that may thereby be gained, struggles with a task at first too mighty for Him ' ; ' He is Himself ever growing to the growing task which He sets Himself.'

In passing let us not overlook the logical point, minor as it is, that on these lines God will never be perfect. In his vision of the consummation Professor Foster anticipates that ' the glory of God thus attained will be light ineffable.' But if God is now unequal to His cosmic task, and if that task grows unendingly, His approach to perfect competence must, at best, be asymptotic. ' Alps on Alps arise.' Perfect, that is, will be an epithet inapplicable to God's work no less than man's, and inapplicable not merely now but for ever.

I need hardly say that most people are in cordial agreement with Professor Foster's preference for a dynamic to a static view of God. By static is meant, presumably, that notion of a rigid immutable Absolute which has often haunted, and still haunts, the realms of philosophy, and which has found epigrammatic expression in the *mot* of a famous metaphysician, ' nothing real ever moves.' To a faith fed by the Bible revelation of ' the living

[1] This passage as a whole rests upon the assumption, which it is impossible to grant, that we are entitled to call the present phase of the Universe a complete expression of the Divine will. It assumes, in other words, that the existing will of God is all, and always, realised.

God ' this, of course, can have no meaning. But it is another question whether ' the living God ' can be identified with ' the growing God ' in the sense indicated by Professor Foster in the uncompromising words just quoted.

The living God, clearly, is a God possessed of Will, and expressing that will in action. He is not unrelated to the changes occurring in His world ; and if His relation to them be positive, we cannot speak of Him as sheerly unchangeable, since He must change in acting upon a developing universe if He is not to change in a deeper, sinister sense. Mechanical uniformity of reaction to an altering situation is, ethically, no better than caprice. God, then, is the God of history—the history of individuals, of nations, of the race. How vital this reality of ' change ' in God is to the religious mind comes out, for instance, in the cardinal experience of forgiveness. His bestowals on the penitent and on the impenitent are, and for moral reasons must be, distinct. Fellowship is reciprocal, and in accordance with our attitude there must be variation on the part of God. This variety of Divine action within human life is one aspect of what is meant by ' the living God,' and religion cannot dispense with it.

But a growing God ? Is this inferentially present in the great religious truth we have just noted, is it conceivably only a different expression of the same truth ? This must not be assumed. The relation of God to time, as is well known, forms one of the *cruces* of theological philosophy ; and it

must be said that the average modern handling of the topic as a whole scarcely reveals an adequate sense of its excessive difficulty and intricacy. Out of the past debate three possible views have emerged. First, God is unrelated to time as mathematical truths are ; second, He is within time, like our own empirical consciousness, enveloped by it, and, so to speak, its subject or victim ; third, He lives in an eternal present, and reality is for Him one duration which includes past, present, and future, as distinct from that abstract present better known to us which excludes from itself an abstract past and an abstract future. Professor Foster, without debate, takes the second view for granted : from the sentence already quoted, ' Why should He not think of things He had not thought of ? ' it is plain that God is conceived of as within time as much as ourselves. This will hardly do. If to apply the conception of growth to God involves His subjection, on a par with men, to time's passage and duration, we shall have no choice but to attribute to Him, to select but one example, such an ignorance of the future as will wreck Christian faith in providence from end to end.

The tendency on Professor Foster's part to push to its very limit the analogy between man's experience and God's leads to other consequences of a drastic sort. Thus, after pointing out in an admirable passage that the painter grows as he paints, creating his own powers as truly as his picture, he adds that with God also it is so. But then, in time

the energies of the painter decay, and, with his energies, his skill ; shall we carry this over to the Divine life ? In other words, the human analogy cannot be used *simpliciter* but only, as logicians say, *secundum quid*. Our thought of God should not be too human.

It does not on the whole appear as if partisans of the theory that God develops were prepared to carry through their view to its logical conclusion. They seem to keep a tacit distinction between metaphysical and moral attributes. I do not, for instance, observe that Professor Foster anywhere contends that God is now more holy or more loving than formerly. Certain phrases, it is true, may suggest an increase of His wisdom, but not His love or holiness. But if so, then once more there is in this latter respect no important divergence of opinion between Professor Foster and the best theology of the past, for it has always been held—save by an occasional Neoplatonic thinker—that God's love has changed in its manifestation within time. It has done so in history, for Christ appeared at one date and not before ; it has done so in the individual experience. But in itself, theologians are wont to teach, it has never changed ; and from his silence on the matter we are probably entitled to suppose that Professor Foster agrees.

In this supposition we are encouraged by the definite terms he has used on the more general topic. Impatient with the view that the first need of religion is that God should be unchangeable, he suggests that for ' unchangeability ' we should

put 'reliability.' 'The need,' he continues, 'is that in the stresses of life we may be able always to turn to God and find Him invariably helpful, dependable, reliable.' Nothing could be better, but is not the opponent's whole case conceded in the one word 'invariably'? After all, God is *unchangeably* helpful. His character is perpetually the same. We cannot call the Divine immutability in question without finding ourselves obliged to affirm it in a new form. There is truth which cannot be dispensed with in the old prophetic word: 'I the Lord change not, therefore ye, O house of Israel, are not consumed.'

The proposal to define God as change, or progress, or a Becoming would probably be more convincing were it not for the fact that Becoming as such implies that which does not become. As we may put it in a paradox which all the same is true, it is only the permanent that changes. Mutable would have no sense for our minds but for the contrast with immutable. It is unnecessary to adduce here all the puzzles that cluster round the question of personal identity or continuity, but at all events it is clear that not even in the case of the human individual does there exist any possibility of bringing all the constitutive facts under the rubric of 'becoming.' Some identity of content or principle must persist under changing forms of life if the 'I' of to-day is to be in any real sense identical with the 'I' of twenty years ago. But if change is a category unequal to the data of human experience, because there are data it does not

cover, its insufficiency for the higher case is evident.

But this is not to assert the Divine unchangingness, but rather to imply its opposite ; and thereby we open up a final and most momentous phase of the subject. It was said above that only the permanent changes, and this truth may well suggest, what it exemplifies, the general principle that our religious thinking, done as it necessarily is from the periphery, not the centre of things, must end always in antinomy. Professor Foster's argument for the finitude and growth of God seems to me to gain its plausibility from the fact that he overlooks the presence of antinomy in religious thought at every turn. No doubt the writer who appeals to antinomy is often a very annoying person, intent merely on eluding an irresistible argument. And he may actually be doing this, if he drags in antinomy at the wrong place. But also he may simply be forcing on his neighbour's attention the specific character of religious knowledge. The theologian is often surprised to come upon a theological antinomy ; he insists on treating it as an accident. But, so far from being an accident, it is of the very fibre and core of religious thought. The surprising thing would be *not* to encounter it in religion at the end of any given avenue leading out from the starting-point of experience.

It remains to apply these generalities to our present theme. We have already considered what really is one form of antinomy in our discussion of the ' finite ' view of God. It became clear that

there are divers human experiences which cannot be transferred to God, or in any way predicated of Him as experiences of His own ; our sinful desires, for example, fall outside His personal life. They are over against Him ; but if anything whatever is in any positive sense other than God, He is so far, and in that respect, finite. We may call Him so, in a given relation, if we judge the term a helpful one. And yet writers like Professor Foster, who urge the predicate ' finite ' upon us, are compelled to add that God is immeasurable and illimitable. Illimitable, so far as I can see, is just infinite. Certain things are outside God, yet He has no limits—and this is an antinomy.

So again when we seek to construe the relation of God to time and its contents.[1] The difficulties of this topic are as old as theism ; philosophers and theologians have done their best with them, more or less effectively. It is of course easy to make the problem shorter and simpler by wiping out one

[1] It is to be hoped that the work of thinkers like Bergson and Croce will lead to history, as a specific kind of reality, being taken more seriously by philosophers. Idealists of every school may find food for thought in a passage such as the following : ' There is a reality which stands over against individual action in all its forms, theoretical and practical. This reality is the whole, which is not constituted of the mere sum total of individual actions, but is the resultant or issue of constituent individual actions. In its complete form it stands before the mind as history. There in history stands unalterable fact. It is made and cannot be unmade, but we have made it and it is making us ' (Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Croce*, pp. 106-107). What is lacking here, however, is the perception that while the past fact is unalterable, its value and meaning for our experience still remains to be determined, and that we, under God, have a hand in determining it.

half of the facts. Time, for instance, may be degraded into the merely subjective and illusory, as is done by a host of metaphysicians. Whether reality is denied to time, or only so low a degree of reality allowed that it can be ignored in the final reckoning, in either case God is untroubled by any relation to history or the filling of the time-scheme. Time is an intruder ; in Shelley's phrase, it ' *stains* the white radiance of eternity.' Ideas of the same kind may be found in certain mediaeval heretics, who applied the doctrine of Nihilism to the incarnation, protesting that at the coming of Christ nothing really happened which touched the Divine life. God's nature was wholly unaffected. But the Church of course would not have it.

On the other hand, relief from antinomy may be sought by declaring boldly that God has a career like any one of us—that, in short, He is growing. In its general drift, this will always commend itself to religious people in certain moods. To cut the Divine life away from all positive connexion with the stream of events would be to land ourselves in sheer theological agnosticism. No index of God could then be found in the noblest manifestations of human character. ' He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father ' would have nothing more than an emotional value. All passionate declarations of the preacher to the effect that in Jesus the Eternal has interposed to bear our load, or that through Christ's experience a new interior sympathy with human need has accrued even to God, become only so much poetic sentiment. Thus by a vital need

of religion we seem driven to assert that God has new experiences. If for Him the temporal succession is other than a vain and transient drama, if He does more than eternally contemplate the succession as a whole, then His will projects into history, and somehow its issues are for Him a gain.

This would be more or less plain sailing, were it not that faith with equal necessity eternalises the Divine life, denying the quality of progress to the character of God ; and it is this aspect which, by unreal simplification of the data, Professor Foster ignores. The Christian mind cannot under any circumstances admit that God is more righteous or more compassionate now than at some earlier point, or that He is wiser, or that one day He will be more competent to rule the world than He now is. Pagan faiths no doubt show something of the kind, but Christianity has not even been tempted by the idea. ' He who is over all is God, blessed for ever ' ; ' Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.' Professor Foster disclaims the wish to deal with matters ' beyond the reach of our observation ' ; yet, in summing up, he rightly deals with a far distant future, predicting that God will yet surmount all obstacles strewn in His path by the perverted mind of man. Such a prophecy, regarding what is far beyond our observation, is of course the utterance of faith. The same faith, however, embraces the past equally with the future, though neither past nor future can be ' observed ' ; and in that past, to its farthest limit, it beholds God as perfect and all-sufficing.

This, it will be said, is to end in contradiction ; God in history and God above history form an opposition. It is at all events an antinomy—the simultaneous affirmation of two ultimate truths whose unity, or point of convergence, is out of sight. There seems no other way of understanding the two ideas except as distinct and united at the same time ; they are mutually dependent ; each flows out of the other, and in each the other is presupposed. It is just because faith is sure of God's positive relation to history that it cannot away with the notion that this relation should react creatively on His character by way of developing His moral being. It is the ' living ' God who says, ' I the Lord change not.' How these two conceptions can be true at once is an insoluble problem ; it is but one of a class of problems not accidental but native to genuine thought concerning God.

IV *Jesus Christ and Prayer*[1]

In a very true sense these two realities, Jesus and Prayer, are enough to define the fact of Christianity. Jesus is the secret of the Christian religion as a self-accrediting message of Divine grace to the sinful, and Prayer is the vital function of the characteristic faith which that message has evoked. In the personality of Christ we are confronted by the great historic Fact in which we behold the index of the Father, as faithfully and unchangeably Redeemer; Prayer, on the other hand, when offered in the light of Jesus, is the all-decisive inward fact, the distinct attitude of human souls, which indicates how far Jesus' revelation has achieved its purpose. He who knows what Jesus and Prayer mean, knows the Christian religion.

The Christian mind has never been able to avoid a twofold, or alternating, estimate of Jesus, neither aspect of which it will ever be possible to reduce entirely to terms of the other. In the incipient theology of Asia Minor, and even earlier, in the religious thought of the New Testament, there is discernible a tendency to interpret Christ in two ways which are both true at once; *κατὰ πνεῦμα* and *κατὰ σαρκά*. Or to put it otherwise, in more modern and perhaps more technical language,

[1] *Expositor*, July 1920.

Jesus has invariably been regarded on the one hand as a revelation of God—a Human Life in whom the Father is perfectly presented—a revelation that appeals for faith, demands the obedience of worship, and in that character is somehow over against us, as God Himself is. Faith looks outward to Him and directs upon Him its whole power of apprehension, because it finds in Him all that can be called salvation ; in this general and naïve sense He has been, always and for every Christian mind, on the Divine side of reality. At present we are not concerned with the varied expression which this fundamental conviction has been invested in the Christological affirmations of the Creeds. These are, and must be, subject to the freely revising power of later generations of the living Church.

But, on the other hand, Jesus has simultaneously and with equal universality been interpreted as our Brother in life and death, our Example and Forerunner in obedient faith—one of ourselves in the deepest sense, with a religious life of His own, for which He is responsible and which forms the core of His personal being. It is notorious that if this aspect of the question has suffered undue neglect in ecclesiastical Christology, the fault does not lie with the New Testament. Not to speak of the Synoptic Gospels, the Epistle to the Hebrews in particular contains daring but veracious words concerning the piety of Jesus, His communion with the Father, His experience of temptation, His prayers and supplications ' offered up with strong

crying and tears.' So that 'Jesus Christ and Prayer' is a topic drawn straight out of the facts. Jesus the Believer is as real as Jesus the Revealer.

We cannot, however, contemplate these two aspects of the whole Fact of Christ—His manifestation of God and His communion with God—without at once perceiving that they are vitally related to each other. They are not conjoined by accident. It might indeed be asked whether in scope and meaning they are not precisely coterminous; whether, that is to say, our proper ground of faith in God is not just Christ's faith in God—this, and nothing else. Have we any other ultimate and sufficient reason for making an indissoluble connexion between our faith in the living God and the personality of Jesus than this, that Jesus first exhibits what faith in the living God can be? Is Jesus' trust the last ground of our trust? Put in this way, the question is not one which I myself could answer in the affirmative, for this reason. It must not be forgotten that, in addition to His religious life, Jesus had a history, a career, and into this career there entered facts or experiences of supreme and permanent revealing significance—the Resurrection, for example—which cannot be accurately described as mere elements of His inner life; they happened to Him. But these two, the subjective and the objective—to use a perhaps overwrought and many-coloured distinction—cannot be separated without a false abstraction which distorts the given data. They are presented to us, in the pages of the New Testament, as a living

whole, as forming the reality which we know as 'Jesus.' But though personally, I should feel this difficulty about confining that which reveals God to Jesus' faith and prayer, I should yet contend emphatically that the two, the inward life and the career, are strictly organic to each other and are intelligible only as one casts light upon the other. In the words of Thomas Erskine: 'A son may reveal a father in two ways: either by being like him—so entirely in his image as to be justified in saying, He that hath seen me hath seen my father—or by manifesting a constant reverential, loving trust, and thus testifying that the father is worthy of such a trust. Jesus revealed the Father in both these ways.' He not only stood with God over against men; just as truly He stood with men over against God. And our present interest is to mark that, except for His loving, reverential trust, the revelation of the Father would not have been imparted in moral ways, and could not have been morally appreciated. Revelation, if it is to be more than a verbal, theoretic declaration, must come through an absolute reflection of the Father, caught by and flung out from a perfect soul, in whose depths men should read and love it. That reflection is given specially in Jesus as He prays. There we look into His soul, and find the Father's face mirrored in its depths. His prayer is His faith in movement.

An exhaustive treatment of the theme is not possible here, but we may, I think, signalise the chief points of interest and moment by considering

first Jesus' practice of prayer ; next, the convictions underlying His prayer-life ; and finally (and more briefly), the tendency which Christians have often shown to pray directly to Jesus. Throughout we shall take the Christological point of view—that is, we shall ask under each head what light is flung upon the personality of Christ, as manifesting the Father.

(1) Jesus' practice of prayer. In this field, as elsewhere, the believer is intuitively aware of both things—Christ's unity with men and His difference from them.

(*a*) In prayer Jesus is one with us. Towards His Father, it is evident, He felt the same religious awe and humility that befit men ; He prayed as we do, and, again like us in our sincere hours, He prayed because of a felt necessity to pray. He bowed reverently before the incomparable majesty of God, bowed with a holy fear that would not use familiarity overmuch. We are accustomed to speak of Jesus as our Pattern, but that great conception we spoil, by vulgarising its appeal, when we permit ourselves to suppose, even though it be half-consciously, that His motive at any point was to furnish an example. Precisely in this matter of prayer, it was His unconscious influence that went deepest. It was when the disciples found Him praying in a certain place that they came with the request : 'Lord, teach us to pray.' They were moved to the depths by the perception that with Him prayer was engaged in for its own sake, or rather for God's sake. Our Lord's prayer-

life is indeed exemplary, but it cannot be too emphatically said that no act is exemplary which is not first of all dutiful and spontaneous. Thus we lay it down as our basal assumption that Jesus prayed in virtue of an inward compulsion, of an irrepressible desire for that communion without which He could not have continued to live.

Christology has fallen into difficulties here—into puzzles, I fear we must say, largely of its own making. Christ at prayer may even become a great mystery. Men who occupied the standpoint of a speculative Trinitarianism naturally found it hard to explain how Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, could pray at all, or how, if He did pray, He could escape praying implicitly to Himself, since His Divine nature, in common with the Father and the Spirit, is being addressed by His manhood. We avoid these enigmas by starting from the Gospel picture. Some questions are unanswerable because they ought never to be asked. We cannot make Christ too human, if only His life is for us a transparent medium of Divine grace. He kept Himself in the love of God by the only method and through the only experience available for a moral personality, namely, through fellowship and obedience; or, as we may otherwise express it, through that steadfastly maintained attitude of adoration and receptiveness for which our ordinary name is Prayer.[1] Apart

[1] Prayer, however, not regarded as a movement of spirit ending within itself, but as taking shape in action devoted to the Kingdom of God.

from this uninterrupted vision of the Father, this perpetual acceptance of life at the Father's hands, the activity even of Jesus, however morally noble and aspiring, would religiously have been fruitless.

We cannot now pursue this thought into the details of Jesus' recorded prayers. Suffice it that alike in His more protracted periods of communion and in brief gusts of petition wrung from Him by the exacting needs of ministry, His struggle in the Garden, and the last dark hours on the Cross, He invariably prays under the stress of need. But that need must not be construed in terms of utility. Prayer was not for Jesus a weapon in the struggle for existence. It was no necessary evil, borne resignedly, but the joy and rejoicing of His heart. It was the Son's need to keep unbroken touch with the Father. Nothing brings Him nearer to us than this. As we listen to His prayers, there comes home to us overpoweringly a sense of His experiential oneness with all who have cried to God because God alone was the strength of their heart and their portion for ever.

(*b*) But there is also a distinction between His prayers and ours, and for religion the distinction is as arresting and significant as the identity. The quality of prayer varies with the man. It varies likewise with the vision of God by which it has been evoked and in which it seeks complete satisfaction. It therefore seems to me mere fidelity to the historic record to affirm that Christ's prayers somehow differed from ours inasmuch

as they originated in a uniquely filial consciousness of God which we have good reason to believe dated from early years. They flowed from this filial consciousness, and in turn they nourished it. It is unnecessary on the whole to raise at this point the familiar problem whether the conscious relation of Jesus to the Father was distinct in type from that into which other believers enter, or distinct only in degree. For the contrast of kind and degree is not as helpful as some have thought. If Jesus lived in perfect fellowship with God, while our fellowship is broken and sin-stained, then the difference is one of quality, not quantity, and it is obscured and belittled when terms are used which suggest that Jesus is simply further advanced on the same path by which we are travelling. On the other hand, to speak of a difference of kind is equally misleading, for the fellowship with God He enjoyed unbrokenly is a fellowship into which He bids us follow Him. But a difference of *quality* is obvious. It is indicated clearly, for example, in the extraordinary passage with which the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew concludes—that Johannine inset in the Synoptics, as it may be called : ' No one knows the Son except the Father ; nor does any one know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.' These words of overheard soliloquy confirm the impression we gain elsewhere that Jesus had long realised the fact that no one else had a consciousness of, and trust in, the Father at all approaching His own. What is more, this conviction on Jesus'

part has been endorsed by the Christian mind from the beginning, in this decisive sense that no Christian has ever professed to have the same consciousness of God as Jesus—a consciousness exhibiting the same intimacy, insight or reciprocity. To repeat His sense of God we should have to *be* Jesus over again. But it was in this uniquely qualified consciousness that all His prayers took their rise; to this they gave living expression; by means of such prayer this singular consciousness of the Father was maintained and intensified. Hence we cannot ignore the distinction of Jesus' prayers from ours; prayer, like every moral act, is only as the agent is. It is in reality the same point which many writers have emphasised by calling attention to the absence of penitence from Jesus' devotional language. And the question whether Jesus felt guilty or unworthy in the Father's presence is, one feels, already decided by the fact that it could be made a subject of dispute. Unless in this regard He were not only separate from sinners, but distinct from the saints, His awareness of sin would have been expressed, not in uncertain whispers, but in piercing and overwhelming sorrow; we should not have been suffered to remain in any doubt whether He was or was not a penitent. Had Jesus possessed experimental knowledge of moral evil, through a bad conscience, we should have known it plainly; or rather we should not have known it, for His name would have perished, and Christian religion would never have been.

Jesus was the first in all history to pray thus. Never before had there risen up to God the prayer of perfect sonship; and if, as I have argued, there is a true sense in which He was not the last to offer this new type of prayer, appropriate to the Kingdom of God, yet He still remains unique in the new order, for all the rest have learnt of Him. Not only so, but no pupil has equalled the Master. Thus unity and difference, as between Jesus and ourselves, persists to the end. It is only by virtue of His unapproachable pre-eminence that He creates our derived and imitative experience of prayer.

(2) The convictions which underlie Jesus' prayer-life must now be ascertained. We have to discover Jesus' view of the universe as a whole, in its fundamental and determining characteristics —a world-view partly implicit in His conduct, but also largely explicit in His teaching. Two great thoughts emerge and ask for study.

First, Jesus' conception of Prayer and its significance is but a special aspect of His conception of the Father. In a great hour of exaltation He uttered these words: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth'; and within the limits of that invocation we shall find the thought of God upon which all Jesus' teaching on prayer is built. God is Father; not only so, He is Lord of heaven and earth. Neither side of the great fact must be overlooked. Holy Love, reflected in Jesus' life of sonship, defines for us the sense in which we are to understand 'Father'; but Holy

Love alone and by itself is not what the Christian means by God ; and, what is more important, it is not what Jesus meant. The Father is transcendent, infinite with an infinitude for which nothing is impossible, and as Titius remarks, 'One cannot make an unprejudiced examination of the Gospels without being astonished to find how enormously important for Jesus' view of God was His impression of God's omnipotence and infinite sublimity.' Far from impairing the Jewish belief on that head, He intensified and deepened it to the uttermost. Nature, in contrast to the Father's power, is nothing. This glorious thought of the Lord of heaven and earth who is never weary, and who takes up the isles as a very little thing—the thought which had dilated the mind of the great prophet of the Exile—was thus absolutely purified and proclaimed in what, for the religious consciousness, are final and irreducible terms.

In a large degree the modern mind has lost the key to this. The world of matter and its laws has separated us from the Father ; we are caged and confined by rigidities of uniformity, and men look out through the bars—not seldom men who love prayer—and talk as though it were happier to be inside the cage than out. It is occasionally suggested that Jesus thought as He did only because 'He was still untouched by our modern knowledge according to which the whole course of nature is controlled by calculable laws.' It is assumed that modern conceptions, had He been aware of them, would have changed His faith. But this is un-

believable. What was primary with Jesus was not a world-view, which is perpetually liable to revision, but assurance of the living God, which can never change. Alike in life and prayer He was free in soul, and He was free precisely because of His unshaken certainty that God is free. As Principal Cairns has said in familiar words, which have brought light to many minds : 'For the first time in history there appeared on earth One who absolutely trusted the Unseen, who had utter confidence that Love was at the heart of all things, utter confidence also in the Absolute Power of that Absolute Love and in the liberty of that Love to help Him.' We speak in the sense of Jesus, therefore, when we place behind His prayers the conviction of an omnipotent Father freely wielding all that is meant by Nature for the realisation of unspeakably gracious ends ; a Father to trust whom renders unthinkable the notion of the cosmos as a closed system of effects and causes. This in no sense relieves us of the difficult intellectual problem of how the liberty of God is to be exhibited as reconcilable with the order of the world, a problem, it may well be, which we shall never completely solve. But a man's deepest convictions are his religious convictions, and at the basis of Jesus' prayer-life there lies the insight that the Father's freedom is unhampered, that it is determined exclusively by spiritual principles, and that the constitution of the world is not at variance with its loving sway.

The second assumption underlying Jesus' practice

and thought of prayer is a new view of Faith. 'Have faith in God,' He enjoins. Man's distrust of the infinite Father is the one thing which can prevent the bestowal of God's highest gifts. Submissive confidence sets free the almightiness of Divine Love. God finds a joy in responding to childlike trust by releasing into the phenomenal order the pent-up forces of His goodness in answer to a faith that relies on the Unseen, exactly as we rely on the Seen, to behave in uniform modes; and Jesus' express teaching is to the effect that if we thus unreservedly depend on God, things as great and difficult will happen as the removal of the mountains. I need not now dwell on spiritual reasons why God can only give us the highest aids when we come with empty hands and expectant trust, why He has here left Himself dependent on our faith as at other points in life He has upon our devoted co-operation. That is a familiar theme. But at all events it is obvious that this great new sense of Faith, which we owe to Jesus, and which has oozed out of the Christian mind equally with His thought of God, has suffered obscuration chiefly by the intellectualistic conception of Faith which overran the Church in the early centuries, when Faith came to mean *imprimis* the acceptance of orthodox belief.

It may be pointed out here that there is nothing in Jesus' mind at all corresponding to certain sincere but hesitating distinctions which later thought admitted, and which are still widely prevalent. He gives no countenance to the view

that prayer ought to exclude petitionary elements, as a vestigial survival of primitive magic. His thought was this : when we pray, we offer desires to God in the well-grounded belief that thereby some things will happen which would not have happened had we refrained from prayer. Also He prayed for physical alterations of the world no less trustfully than for other kinds ; that is the one child-like thing to do. Anything else is sophisticated ; and in point of fact the philosophy which forbids it is equally fatal to prayer for inward grace. Superstition is completely excluded by the circumstance that in both cases, if we follow Jesus, we conclude prayer with an unfailing 'Thy will be done.'

But to take a step forward—these two fundamental thoughts of Jesus, concerning the Almighty Father and human Faith, do not simply co-exist in otiose juxtaposition. If sin is real, some kind of mutual exclusion there must be between God and man, except on terms which would construe our experience of sinning as a direct personal experience of God Himself. But if, as in Jesus, sin be absent, and if His prayers are actually the prayers of perfect faith, then instantly the case of Jesus becomes the ideal limit to which our minds ought to ascend from the highest instances of human devotion. It has rightly been contended by a recent essayist that prayer, everywhere and always, is essentially an act of co-operation with the Spirit of God, and that the prayers of Jesus constitute the point at which the Spirit's operation within the praying mind of

man reached its highest expression, so that in and through His petitions the operations of God within went out to meet the operation of God in the world. Thus, if Christ is the one commanding instance of prayer completely equal to its idea, what we are dealing with is but another form or aspect of the truth that in Him there was a special presence of God. If no prayer of Jesus was left unanswered—whatever may have been the case with instantly quelled wishes—this must have resulted from, or been an illustration of, the principle that prayer is invariably effectual, without drawback or reserve, when the praying spirit is entirely in harmony with God. He who shared God's life was in prayer not merely eliciting but actually expressing God's mind. The Spirit that in part dwells within us dwelt in Him in fulness. One true way of conceiving Christ, accordingly, is to conceive Him as the limiting instance of the immanence of the Spirit of the unseen God, the same Spirit that helps our infirmity when we pray. Here again it is doubtfully illuminating to call this difference blankly one either of kind or degree. But a difference of quality is unmistakable, and one which can never be superseded; for the Spirit's presence in Christ was creative and originating as contrasted with an experience on our part which is unconditionally derived. This difference, as we have seen, is strikingly manifest in the field of prayer. In our thoughts of this whole subject we must not start with ready-made conceptions of what prayer is: we have in Jesus' prayer a new standard of

comparison, as it is through Him that we receive the Spirit that makes possible for us such prayer as His.

Possibly the last thing worth saying under this head is that for Jesus prayer is charged with power to effect real changes. It is meant to have an answer. People who came to Him and would take no denial refreshed His spirit in a most wonderful and significant fashion. The recent flood of fertilising eschatological study ought not to hide from us the fact that in His belief prayer can hasten the coming of the Kingdom ; by the touch of faith men can liberate the gracious energies of the Father. God is living and waits to act. How we Protestants need to recover this sense of the present and transcendent activity of the Father, and how profoundly such a rediscovery of the living God would transform our prayers ! Dean Church somewhere explains Newman's choice of the Roman communion by the fact that Newman 'could not see a trace in English society of that simple and severe hold of the unseen which is the colour and breath, as well as the outward form, of the New Testament life.' To go on our knees to what, with a specious simplicity, is misdescribed as the modern view of the world (as if there were only one), tamely to surrender Jesus' thought of God, His thought of Faith, His thought of Prayer as uniting these two in living and redeeming unity, is a far more definite apostasy from the fundamental truth of the Christian Gospel than heresies against which we are cautioned much more frequently. I am per-

suaded, however, that it is apostasy which no Christian mind ever commits in innermost conviction, whatever wild and whirling words may be resorted to in technical discussion.

(3) A few concluding words may be added on the subject of Prayer to Christ. We must speak briefly, for here we are no longer treating of the substantialities of history, but rather with what may be designated the natural, and even legitimate though not obligatory, speculation of faith. It must not be supposed that the practice of addressing Christ in prayer is obsolete, or that it obtains solely in definitely conservative circles. On the contrary, I have learned that Professor Martin Rade, a very attractive member of the Ritschlian school, and a thinker of pronouncedly liberal sympathies, not long since declared that nothing would ever induce him to discontinue the custom of praying to Christ directly—a custom, he added, in which faith itself encouraged him. Be his attitude right or wrong, at least there are well-known precedents for it in New Testament religion, while the most cursory glance over ancient and modern liturgies will inform us that the habit has never been unfamiliar to the Church.

One interpretation of the practice may well be disallowed at the very outset. It is not a valid defence of prayer to Christ to argue that He is, as it were, one of the glorified saints, pre-eminent it is true, yet not in a class by Himself. In Dr. George Adam Smith's *Life of Henry Drummond* a correspondent is quoted who testifies that after

Drummond's death he sometimes prayed to him. That is a touching fact, intelligible to many, but it is no true parallel to Christian prayer addressed to the Christian's Lord. It lacks the religious presuppositions of the other.

Again, prayer to Christ is clearly wrong if it forms an alternative to, or substitute for, prayer to God. Unquestionably, it has often figured thus in the religious life. People have contracted the lamentable habit of regarding Christ as more accessible than the Father, more loving, more easy to be entreated, and they have taken their desires chiefly or exclusively to Him, as others to the Virgin, shirking contact with a sterner God. But this can have no place in a faith inspired by the New Testament.

Premising that in regard to this form of prayer there exists a curious cross-division of opinion, some conservatives rejecting it, some liberals approving it—I venture to think there are two points of view from which it appears as permissibly Christian, and natural in the best sense. First, the great reality apprehended by faith is God in Christ. Not certainly Christ apart from God, yet quite as certainly not God apart from Christ. 'Apart from Christ,' said Chalmers, 'I find that I have no hold of God at all.'[1] The supreme object of confidence, hence the true object of

[1] It was objected that on such terms atheism becomes the only right creed for those who have never heard of Christ. But was Chalmers doing more than echo the self-evidencing words: 'No man cometh unto *the Father* but by Me'?

supplication and communion, is the Father revealed in the Son. But this reality may be grasped, so to say, from either side ; it may be apprehended either in its proximate or its ultimate aspect. It may be seized in that aspect of it which is closer to our minds, the revealing Personality ; or again in that aspect which fills and gives meaning to manifested fact, the revealed God. In both cases the reality is the same. And he who prays to Christ will say, not erroneously as I think, that he does no more than name this reality in terms of historic fact. In strictness, when he says Christ, what is in his mind is the God who draws near in Christ, and with whom, in experience, Christ is identified.

Furthermore, if the conception of the exalted Christ has any place in the believing mind—if it is not a piece of pure mythology—then it is difficult to conceive of the glorified Lord save in forms which virtually identify Him with God and thus make prayer to Him—this time not in view of the historical revelation merely but in face of present certainties—an instinctive movement of adoration. To believe only that Christ was immortal, like other men, but not that He now lives in the fullest possession of blessedness and power, appears to me radically unjust to the implications of faith as that faith has lived and conquered from the beginning until now. This, however, means that if a man prays to Christ, he only does so rightly, as Herrmann puts it, in so far as 'at the moment of prayer every difference between the Person of Jesus and the one personal God is done away.'

What has just been said is no more than a defence of the legitimacy of such prayer in Christian devotion, certain conditions being fulfilled. None will maintain that it is a necessary or vital expression of saving trust. We are learning by degrees that Christian experience admits a variety of religious types, and that these types have each its congenial way of reacting upon the Gospel.

When we contemplate Jesus' thought of prayer as a whole, under the strong light of His personal religion, we are forced back upon very searching questions about the theology and the Church life of our age. It is clear that we are not utterly believing. We have sunk into a species of Christian naturalism, which in certain cases is prepared to formulate exactly the laws of historical periodicity by which the Kingdom of God goes forward in one age and backward in the next. But this is to be spectators of the great Divine movement, not fellow-labourers in it with God, as through prayer we may be. It is to breathe an atmosphere far removed from Jesus' conception of God, the All-loving, the All-powerful, the All-free. And it is as we triumphantly and adoringly recapture His thought of the Father that His kindred thought of prayer will again possess us, and His Church will again be made adequate to the infinite task of missionary evangelism and social reclamation.

V The Vicarious Penitence of Christ[1]

THE view that Christ atoned for human sin by offering a vicarious repentance to God in our name has existed as a recognised form of theory for close upon sixty years, but it may be questioned whether it was ever so widely spread as now. In the Church of England especially it has made many friends. The favour accorded to it is no doubt one more symptom of recoil from older views which had laid excessive emphasis upon the physical sufferings of Christ and tended to regard His work as the discharge of an official function that might be accompanied by, but in no sense necessarily involved on His part a sympathetic realisation of the experience of those on whose behalf He suffered. When it is said, for example, that had Jesus lived only a week after His birth redemption would none the less have been accomplished, or that the shedding of one drop of His blood would have purged the sins of the whole world, it is plain that His saving work has somehow become artificially detached from His spiritual history and experience, and that the mystery of atonement, of which all are profoundly conscious, has been turned into a purely enigmatical product of omnipotence operating on a sub-moral plane, instead of an amazing act of

[1] *Expositor*, February 1916.

grace, far transcending the principles of common sense and ordinary morality, and making its Divine appeal to the free and conscious spirit. Whatever we may think of the theory of vicarious penitence, as a consistent or satisfying account of Christ's interposition, it at all events impresses the student as the fruit of devout and intensely spiritual thought; of thought which moves, or aims at moving, on the level of New Testament religion at its highest, and which has with a great measure of success avoided the temptation to express an anti-legal Gospel in legal terms.

This paper falls naturally into three parts. In the first place some account will be given of the best-known expositions which have taken vicarious penitence as their leading principle of explanation. Next, the critical objections which seem to forbid our acceptance of the theory will be briefly set forth. Finally—and this part of the discussion of course matters most—search will be made for the religious motives which may be supposed to have prompted the theory, and which must somehow find expression in any doctrine of atonement that will satisfy or inspire the Christian mind.

It is fitting that we should start with Dr. M'Leod Campbell, whose work, *The Nature of the Atonement*, published in 1856, belongs to that very small class of treatises on theology which are also felt to be great books of devotion. It is interesting to find a Continental observer like Pfleiderer express the opinion that by thrusting out Campbell from its midst the Scottish Church arrested its

healthy theological development for more than half a century. To the end of his life, I believe, Dr. Chalmers derived real satisfaction from the memory that he had not voted for Campbell's deposition.[1] It may be that Campbell failed to gain many adherents for the details of his special view, but there is small exaggeration in saying that since his time no British thinker who has not sat at his feet has been able to write rewardingly on the deepest problems of the Cross.

As is well known, Campbell discerns in the work of Christ two great aspects: that in which He is God's representative to man, and that in which He is man's representative before God. Of the first a brief notice is sufficient. What Christ does in God's name is to manifest His Fatherliness, especially with regard to sin. In thus revealing the Father's will towards the sinful, Christ necessarily became a Man of sorrows, suffering thus just because He looked on sin and sinners with God's eyes and felt respecting them with God's heart. Thereby, in and through His pain, He condemned sin, and made known God's wrath and judgment upon it. But we ought not to call His sufferings penal. For the pain was endured in sympathy with God and as a vital part of the Son's witness-bearing to the Father.

The most distinctive characteristic of Campbell's

[1] Campbell was deposed by the General Assembly in 1831, on the ground that his views regarding the personal assurance of salvation and the universality of the atonement were not in harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith.

view, however, lies in his treatment of the second aspect of Christ's work, that in which He deals with God on behalf of man. Jonathan Edwards had in passing alluded[1] to the thought—which he at once dismissed as untenable—that a sufficient satisfaction for sin might consist in an adequate repentance—or to use Edwards's own language, 'a repentance, humiliation, and sorrow for sin proportionable to the majesty despised.' He assumed, says Campbell, that such a grief and repentance was out of the question. But so far from being out of the question, it is the very heart of the matter; this adequate penitence Christ did actually render to God in our name. As he puts it in a carefully worded passage: 'That oneness of mind with the Father, which toward man took the form of condemnation of sin, would in the Son's dealing with the Father in relation to our sins, take the form of a perfect confession of our sins. This confession as to its own nature must have been a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man.'[2] Or even more explicitly thus: 'That response has all the elements of a perfect repentance in humanity for all the sin of man—a perfect sorrow—a perfect contrition—all the elements of such a repentance, and that in absolute perfection, all—except the personal consciousness of sin; and in that perfect response in Amen to the mind of God in relation to sin is the wrath of God rightly met, and that is accorded to

[1] In his *Satisfaction for Sin*, chap. ii. pp. 1-3.

[2] *Nature of the Atonement* (6th Ed.), pp. 116-17.

Divine justice which is its due, and could alone satisfy it.'[1] Such an Amen to God's judgment, he argues, was due: due to the truth of things; due on our behalf, though of ourselves we had no power to render it; due from Christ as partaking of our nature and our true Brother; and it constitutes a fuller satisfaction to God's righteous heart of love than any punishment could be. It is not that Christ's sufferings show how God can punish sin; these sufferings are actually the Divine feelings towards sin, therefore their effect is to purify the sinner. 'We feel,' he writes, 'that such a repentance as we are supposing would be the true and proper satisfaction to offended justice, and that there would be more atoning worth in one tear of the true and perfect sorrow . . . than in endless ages of penal woe.'[2] All this was possible for Christ because, being what He was, He alone could realise completely the evil of sin's alienation. It was an expiatory penitence, and by spiritual participation in it we come to be at one with the righteousness and love of the Father. The feeling of God concerning sin has found its utterly satisfying response.

Near fifty years passed before Campbell's dominant idea was taken up by a kindred spirit and given a central place in an impressive and subtly conceived argument. This was in the late Dr. Moberly's *Atonement and Personality*. Moberly treats of what may be called the prolegomena to the theory in an analysis even more delicate than

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Campbell's. Thus in an early chapter he investigates the interior nature of penitence, and contends that all penitence, as we know it, is and must be imperfect, inasmuch as past sin has made blunt and dull the sinner's consciousness of what sin is. None the less, we can form the conception of perfect penitence, though we cannot realise it in ourselves. It would be such a change of self, such a self-identity with holiness, as would by contradiction and negation of past evil make the past dead and plant the self once again in unity with righteousness. The imperfect penitence of sinners points to the reality of its own perfect ideal, and this in fact is actualised in Jesus Christ. As Moberly puts it: 'The personal identity with righteousness in condemnation and detestation of sin, which penitence in ideal perfection would mean and be, is possible only to One who is personally Himself without sin.'[1] This is the first stage of the argument.

The second stage is to the effect that vicarious penitence is a profound and redeeming fact of life. Personalities are not so distinct as we too readily assume; they are less and less distinct in proportion as love and unselfishness increase, so that men really can and do repent for each other. Indeed, the better any man is, the more he is capable of repenting vicariously for a loved one. Here Moberly adduces the case of a mother whose heart is broken for the sin of her child. She actually endures penitence, he contends, for her

[1] *Atonement and Personality*, p. 43.

child's wrong-doing, and her capacity to do this depends not really on her own possible share of the guilt incurred, but upon the completeness of her own holiness. She is one with her child not in nature merely, but in love; and in love the community of nature is perfected. But all this even she is only up to a certain point: what fails in her is absolutely realised in Jesus. He was one by nature with the sinful, His love had an infinite depth and reach, and from His gazing perpetually with undimmed vision on the holiness of God there resulted a unique consciousness of the interior character and horror of sin. When we consider this awareness, so piercing and so adequate, of what sin is, His perception of its character, which is also its doom, and His own inherent identity with righteousness, we see that in Him there were present all the conditions of a perfectly atoning penitence. Penitence, in short, attained in Him to its consummate form, but at the cost of life. Thus the perfect sacrifice of penitence offered by the sinless Christ is the true atoning sacrifice for sin. 'In the bitter humiliation of a self-adopted consciousness of what sin is, He bowed His head to that which, as far as mortal experience can go, is so far at least the counterpart on earth of damnation.'[1] Or as it is put in another place: 'The suffering involved in this is not, in Him, punishment, or the terror of punishment; but it is the full realising, in the personal consciousness, of the truth of sin, and the disciplinary pain of the conquest of sin;

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

it is that full self-identification of human nature, within range of sin's challenge and sin's scourge, with holiness as the Divine condemnation of sin, which was at once the necessity—and the impossibility—of human penitence.' [1] Further, this consummation of penitence, involving such a strain of body, mind and will that it killed Him, is the death of sin, and the realisation of complete righteousness. And this transcendent act of penitence on Christ's part is made ours by the operation of the Holy Spirit transforming the human self from within, so making subjective in us what in Him had first been objective.[2] Its virtue becomes ours through the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

It ought to be noted that so far from ignoring or evading the natural objection that no man can repent of any sin but his own, Dr. Moberly deliberately faces this idea in one of his central chapters, and utterly rejects it. For him such a conception of penitence is simply wrong. 'Penitence,' he writes, 'in the perfectness of its full meaning, is not even conceivably possible, except it be to the personally sinless.' [3] For penitence, at its deepest, is not only or chiefly regret for sin or the consciousness of guilt; it is definable, rather, as 'self-identity with righteousness.' So far as appears from this definition, Dr. Moberly would find a real

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[2] One element in the purpose of the Cross is to evoke penitence in us, but the principle that 'like creates like,' which at times seems to influence Dr. Moberly, will not cover the attribution of penitence to Jesus.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

difficulty in distinguishing penitence and holiness. They seem to form an equation.

His argument as a whole is virtually reproduced by his son, Mr. W. H. Moberly, in an essay on the Atonement in the Oxford collection of 1912 entitled *Foundations*. After replying to the individualistic objection that 'I may feel sorrow, but I cannot intelligibly feel penitence for the sin of another in which I had no hand and which I could not have prevented'[1] by urging that this involves an impossibly atomic view of the moral life in which men are bound up together, he proceeds: 'We may then continue to assert that vicarious penitence is the most 'saving' thing in experience; that it is possible, not in direct but in inverse proportion to the degree in which the penitent is himself tainted; and that the work of Jesus is to be conceived as the same thing raised to a much higher power.'[2] He goes so far as to assert that if we dismiss 'vicarious penitence' as unmeaning and impossible, the problem of atonement is insoluble. Mr. Moberly uses an illustration from *David Copperfield* which has appealed to many—the case of Mr. Peggotty and Em'ly. Let it be stated in his own words. 'The girl was redeemed by her father.[3] Two conditions were necessary to make such redemption possible: the completeness of his love for her, which enabled him to identify himself with her in her shame, and his own undimmed goodness and purity which enabled

[1] *Foundations*, p. 308.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 309.
[3] Her uncle, really.

him to bring her also to a true attitude towards her sin and towards the Moral Law.' [1]

This, then, is the theory in its main outlines, set forth by three connected writers, no doubt with some personal difference of accent, yet with substantial agreement. It has occasionally been suggested that Haering of Tübingen advocates the same view, but this is not borne out by a careful inspection of his language. Haering is quite clear that to speak of Christ's repentance is to use words wrongly. But he holds that in the discharge of His vocation the consciousness of our Lord included such a painful realisation of the antagonism of all sin to God, such an infinite grief for sin, as in God's sight forms a supplement to the imperfect penitence of man, and fulfils the ends of punishment.[2] This is not the theory of Campbell or Moberly, though it may contain much of the truth they have endeavoured to formulate.

What are some of the objections to which their construction seems to be exposed?

To begin, there is nothing in the New Testament in the least resembling the view that Christ repented of our sins vicariously. This is not urged in the least by way of appeal to the words of Scripture as externally authoritative—an idea with which the Christian mind is ceasing to work and will soon not be able to work any more. Nevertheless a spiritual principle to which the New Testament contains not even a faint allusion is, one feels, a good deal more likely to be wrong than

[1] *Foundations*, p. 308. [2] See his *Zur Versöhnungslehre* (1893).

right. It is an immense drawback in a theory that over against it there should stand an indifferent or neutral Scripture, just as a proposed new canon of artistic creation which could be put in no intelligible relation to the aesthetic achievement of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. would make small impression on the best minds. Mr. W. H. Moberly quotes the apostolic phrases 'He bore our sins' and 'He was made sin for us,' as if they meant vicarious penitence ;[1] but not a shadow of exegetical proof for such an interpretation can be given, nor have I anywhere found a serious attempt to show, by an examination of what they say, that the writers of the New Testament had vicarious penitence in their minds.

Again, the application to Jesus, the sinless One, of the idea of vicarious penitence is really not borne out by what happens in human life. If we take the instances already referred to, that of the mother repenting for her sinning child, or of Mr. Peggotty, it seems only a confusion of thought to speak in either case of a strictly *vicarious* repentance. Love and sorrow are there, assuredly : 'sorrow,' as it has been put, 'that expresses love, and love that deepens sorrow.' Even shame is there. But if penitence too is there, as it well may be, I am quite sure that if we could get at Mr. Peggotty's own mind we should find that this penitence was due to the sense that he might have contributed, by some neglect of care or personal example, to the forces which led the child to ruin.

[1] *Foundations*, p. 307.

'Had I been a better man,' we should all say under analogous conditions, 'my friend might not have sinned.' The parent's penitence, in short, is for his own sin, and in so far as it overflows beyond his own life, and takes in more than that, this is because he is a responsible member of a sinful group or society. 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' To appeal, therefore, at this point to the undoubted fact of 'national' humiliation and repentance is illegitimate, for when we as individuals join in national contrition, we have collectively partaken in the sin we then confess. You cannot step over from this to the vicarious penitence of One who, *ex hypothesi*, had never added to the sin of the world.

The most obvious criticism, however, though not the least grave, is that penitence, as a term, is unfortunate and incorrect. For it not merely implies but includes the element of conscious guilt. This is virtually conceded by two of the writers under review. Campbell, in a passage quoted formerly, declares that our Lord's response to the judgment of God has all the elements of a perfect repentance, 'all—excepting the personal consciousness of sin.' And Mr. W. H. Moberly, who believes that the idea of Christ's penitential atonement goes to the very root of human need, takes pains at the outset to define penitence with great care, and actually defines it in such a way as to destroy its utility for his purpose. 'Penitence,' he writes, 'is a word which is often abused; and if it is to serve our purpose we must use it with its fullest meaning;

and understand by it no easy emotion of self-loathing or self-contempt, but a real change of purpose of heart and mind.'[1] A real change of purpose—this is the heart of the matter; the penitent man loathes what he used to love, looks back upon his sin, owns it as his, then disowns it before God with all his might. Can we transfer *this* to Jesus?[2] Always there is the conviction in *my* repentance that I have been stained and made guilty, accompanied by the strong resolve to for-

[1] *Foundations*, p. 293. Bushnell writes *à propos* of M'Leod Campbell: 'Is it clear when Mr. Campbell speaks of repentance in this manner that he means any such thing as we commonly understand by the word? Does he mean that Christ forsakes the sin of the world as being in the guilt of it, and casting it off with a hard and heavy struggle that amounts to a moral revolution of his nature? That would scarcely be a reverent imputation' (*Forgiveness and Law*, p. 31).

[2] We are often led to ask whether those who use the conception of 'vicarious penitence' really mean what they say, and are not employing loose and rhetorical language which they endeavour to secure against misunderstanding by putting alongside of it language of quite different import. When they say 'penitence,' what they are thinking of is 'pain endured at the sight of sin'; which is by no means the equivalent of penitence, but simply one element in it. Thus one writer who asserts that, unless we are to abandon altogether the attempt to understand Christ's sufferings, 'there is nothing with which these can be so well compared as the experience of an awakened conscience,' in analysing shortly afterwards the actual content of Christ's experience specifies only His 'profound sense of the sin of all men, His identification of Himself with the race by whose members it had all been committed, and the pain He suffered in consequence.' But this last complex feeling is not repentance; it is the agony felt over sin by One who had no need to repent. And in R. C. Moberly passages frequently occur which prove that he is only using 'penitence' by a *tour de force*, as thus: 'the sacrifice of supreme penitence, that is, of perfect will-identity with God in condemnation of sin' (p. 129).

sake evil; and unless we mean to pay ourselves with words we cannot put down this element of guilty self-reproach to the imperfect character of penitence as sinners feel it. Jesus had no experimental knowledge of moral evil; He had never put His will into sin or affirmed a sinful volition; to speak of His penitence, accordingly, is wilfully to re-define a word, to insist that in one case it can be employed without that core of meaning which everywhere else is constitutive; and though this may at first attract by its paradox, it will not bear calm scrutiny. Dr. Moberly's argument clearly proceeds on the assumption that Christ could only know the horror of sin adequately if He held towards it an attitude capable of being correctly described as penitential; but there is no reason why we should grant this. His oneness of mind with the Father, about moral evil as about all else, furnishes a true and sufficient basis for Jesus' grief-stricken realisation of the infinite sinfulness of sin.

It is further necessary to point out that the penitential theory seems to revive an old mistake. When we ask ourselves why the old doctrine of simple penal substitution, with all its elements of power, failed to satisfy, the answer is in large part to be found in the impossibility of believing One to have been *punished* who could not on any terms be imagined as feeling the consciousness of guilt. Punishment is not indeed always correlated with the sense of ill-desert, but it ought to be, and in any situation conceived as having actually been pro-

duced by God, it must be. But this principle, fatal to the idea that God punished Christ, cannot again be discarded. If Christ was penitent, a feeling of guilt must have been in His mind, and we are back amongst the very presuppositions which made the older doctrine seem untenable. In both cases there is the same psychological unreality.

A final objection to making vicarious penitence the central thing in our Lord's atonement may be put thus. At bottom the atonement is something provided, something done by God; it is an expression of His nature. Always in religion God is the doer, we are the receivers only. This means, I cannot but think, that whatever constitutes the central core of atonement must be predicable of God; you must be able to carry it back to God Himself and say—What Christ felt, did, suffered, was in the truest sense felt, done, and suffered by God. For the atonement really is the cost to God of forgiveness. But we cannot predicate penitence of God. We cannot represent Him as experiencing contrition for human sin. On the other hand, if what I see in the dying Saviour is holy judgment of sin and infinite self-abnegating love—that I *can* carry back to God; I can take the central experience of Christ and assert it of God Himself. The cross is then seen as a Divine act.

But it is grateful to turn from these objections to the higher task of appreciating some cardinal elements of value in the doctrine we are considering, elements which have won for Campbell and

his successors the gratitude of so many. What is the religious motive or motives by which the theory of vicarious penitence has been prompted, but for which it has found only a doubtful and opaque form of expression? What have we to learn from it?

First, we are shown how the rendering of atonement was a great inward experience of Jesus. It was for Him an infinite mental anguish to come so near to sin as He was brought by His Divine love for the sinful. Where perfect holiness and perfect love meet in such a world as this there is inevitably an unspeakably painful crucifixion of the inmost being. It was not merely that He felt sin's concentrated malice and passion as directed against Himself, as the waves of hate broke against His Cross; it was that He was aware, as men could not be, of the pain they were causing God. To realise the evil of sin, with a mind so clear and true, must be agony. The pressure on Jesus' spirit was such as at last to rob Him of life itself. Something of all this was perhaps concealed, or at least obscured, by the older thought of Christ as executing an office, even though it were the office of a Redeemer; and the traditional maxim that God cannot suffer made it none the easier to perceive that the pain of Jesus over sin is a transcript of the Father's heart. But Campbell opened a window into larger truth, and there are phrases scattered over his pages which still awaken the old thrill of discovery. As thus: 'The sufferer suffers just through seeing sin and sinners with God's eyes and feeling in

reference to them with God's heart' ; 'sufferings which are themselves the expression of the Divine mind regarding our sins' ; 'the living manifestation of perfect sympathy in the Father's condemnation of sin' ; 'the sorrows of holy love endured in realising our sin and misery.' Our sins, in short, bowed Him down as they never can bow us down. Christ did not make the Atonement, as it were in the midst of doing other things, nor was it something that happened to Him ; it was His very being, to be wrought out by living through it and dying in the discharge of the vocation. And that inward experience reveals the Father. What Christ is in history, God is for ever.

Again, we are led to reflect how deep into oneness with men Christ was carried by the sense of sympathy. It is true that sympathy may be thought of in a shallow or sentimental way, with no touch of moral passion. But so may the Fatherhood of God. Neither idea is convincing except as we seize it at its highest point. And sympathy, when taken so, is a genuine key to the experience of Jesus, nor has any one ever put the best meaning of the word so well as Edwards in 'what,' says Bushnell, 'I look upon as the finest paragraph in all his works.' 'A very strong and lively love and pity toward the miserable,' he writes, 'tends to make their case ours ; as in other respects, so in this in particular, as it doth in our idea place us in their stead, under their misery, as it were feeling it for them, actually suffering it in their stead by strong sympathy.' Such love

enabled Christ, with an intensity beyond our thought, to feel shame for the dark wrong-doing of the world, and to take all our responsibilities as His own.[1] We may and do refuse to call this penitence, because the name is a misleading one; but it is in any case a dread reality which enabled Him to make in our name a worthy acknowledgment both of our sin and of the holiness of God. Once we take this point of view, there is not a Pauline phrase about Christ in our place that sounds too strong.

And this reminds us, further, that vicarious penitence, however unsatisfactory as it stands, is suggestive of the truth that at the heart of our Lord's atonement is the perfect acknowledgment made by Him of the righteous judgment of God

[1] Those who reject the idea of vicarious penitence often say such things of Jesus as the above, namely, that 'He took all our responsibilities as His own.' Why, it may be asked, should they in that case decline to say that He who felt 'responsible' for sinners also repented in their name? But when we look into this point, we find a manifest ambiguity in the word 'responsible.' It looks forward as well as backward, and care must be taken not to confuse the two. Jesus unquestionably felt 'responsible' for the future of His brethren and therefore for dealing in holy love with the situation in which they lay. As Dr. Henry Coffin well puts it: 'Jesus felt implicated in all that was not as it should be among the children of men, and cleared Himself from complicity in it by setting Himself resolutely to change it' (*Some Religious Convictions*, p. 145). That is a consciousness of responsibility which in dealing with the present looks forward; our Lord felt bound to save those who could not save themselves. But we must not identify this with a feeling of responsibility for the past, as though Jesus felt chargeable with human failure. He had not personally added to the world's evil, and nothing is gained by resorting to phraseology which naturally suggests that He had.

as embodied in His pain. The passion, in other words, was not accepted in mere dumb resignation ; as expressive of the Father's holy mind it was echoed and ratified in Jesus' soul. He Himself entered, unreservedly, into the reaction of righteousness against sin, and, in the name of the sinful with whom He numbered Himself, rendered up to God a full and glorifying response to His condemnation, confessing its necessity and rightness. For Him the Cross was necessary, not merely that the human heart should be affected by the sight of loving sacrifice, but for deeper reasons based in the nature of the Father—because holy love *must* express itself so, because the last step love can take in condemning sin and resisting it is to bear its malignant assault to the very end.

Where Campbell then appears to have left his argument unfinished is at this point, that he has not shown why our Lord's acknowledgment of the Divine holiness took the form of, or clothed itself in, such a death of agony. Why was a verbal acknowledgment not enough ? We may suggest the answer that Jesus' response to the Father's condemnation could not remain a mere feeling in His mind ; like every sacrificial acknowledgment of the higher will it must clothe itself in an experience of the whole personality—body not less than soul. Part of God's mind about sin is that suffering is linked to moral evil, and from that region of human experience He who so completely identified Himself with us could not stand aside. He entered into it, not in order that as guilty He might

be punished, but that in His dying experience it might be shown once for all how dire are the consequences of transgression. And this could not be without death, of which pain and horror, even to the point of felt desertion, are a constitutive part.

Finally, by the conception of vicarious repentance, with all its inadequacy, it is taught that in order to be saved we must be united with Christ in His attitude to sin. It is when we submit in Him to the Father's condemnation of our guilt that we become right with God. When penitence brings a man to peace, it is because in his repentance he has part in the infinite pain of Christ. The idea of a penitence which Christ shares with us is a mistaken way of suggesting rather that homage to righteousness manifested in judgment which we must share with Him. This surely marks a substantial advance upon the notion of vicarious punishment, which seems fated to convey the false impression that Christ so took our place that we are exempted thereby from everything but the enjoyment of gifts won for us. Campbell reminds us that the sacrifice, the self-submission of Jesus in death, was not one that made ours superfluous; it was one that made ours possible. There was a spirit in it which must become our spirit if we are to be the sons of God.

VI The Unio Mystica as a Theological Conception[1]

In recent years a tendency has been shown on the part of some prominent theologians to question, if not the Christian character of the ' mystic union ' at all events its value as a doctrinal concept. Principal Denney, who has been one of the most unrelenting critics of Ritschlianism in this country, joins with Ritschl in protesting that the idea is one of which we should do well to clear our minds, and has expressed something like gratitude that the phrase is not to be found in the New Testament.[2] What Ritschl complains of is the sentimental associations of the phrase, and the ease with which those who employ it rise superior to the idea of justification through trust in the historic Christ ;[3] what Dr. Denney finds unsatisfactory is the way in which the term ' mystical,' suggestive rather of that which has not yet reached the moral level, such as the union of nature with God, is brought in to describe something which professedly transcends moral relations.[4] Both writers, on grounds of the sort I have indicated, make no use of the idea in their theological constructions, not altogether, as it appears to me, to the advantage of the whole.

[1] *Expositor*, February 1909. [2] *Expositor*, October 1903, p. 256.
[3] *Justification and Reconciliation* (Eng. Trans.), p. 112.
[4] *Expositor*, February 1904, pp. 155 ff.

It is of course impossible to deny that good cause for these complaints, or for at least some part of them, is furnished by the language in which orthodox writers of the post-Reformation period felt free to indulge. Thus we read in a standard work that the Unio Mystica 'is the action of the Holy Spirit, whereby the *substance* of believers is joined, most closely, though without intermixture, to the *substance* of the Holy Trinity and the flesh of Christ.'[1] The conjunction is elsewhere characterised as 'special' and 'intrinsic'; it is set forth as being a case of consubstantiality, two essences becoming one; although it is only fair to say that this is usually followed up by an explicit repudiation of Pantheism. One can see elements in such a description which were sure to offend a later age. Take the use of the term 'substance.' This was the category, of course, by which writers of that day indicated the highest degree of reality; it was indeed their loftiest idea of God Himself. Nothing so adequate or exalted could be said of Him as that He was the ultimate or universal Substance. In moments of personal devotion, no doubt, this idea was put aside; for no one can really pray to a substance;[2] but when a need was felt for the intellectual definitions of the text-books, it was resorted to unsuspiciously once more. This being so, it is not surprising that men should have

[1] König; quoted by Rothe, *Dogmatik*, zweiter Theil, zweite Abtheilung, p. 250.

[2] A substance need not of course be physical or material, but the word inevitably suggests what is less than personal in its intrinsic nature.

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spoken of a substantial union of man to God. A substantial union was the deepest and most real that the human mind could imagine ; it seemed to have in it a secret or inexpressible somewhat far transcending all conscious ethical relations, with an intimacy and intensity to which ethical words fail to do justice. But it would be generally felt now that if the term is taken in its highest sense, no relation can be more intimate or intense than an ethical one ; or at least that the deepest and most passionate experiences do not cease to be also ethical. And even those who feel that they need the word ' mystic ' do not, or at least ought not to, mean by it anything which is defined by contrast with ' ethical,' but rather, I think, ethical relations of a kind more profoundly intimate than any that obtain between one man and another.

It is therefore no argument against the reality of the mystic union, or its value for the interpretation of Christian truth, that people used once to describe it by conceptions which are now felt to be inadequate. To be described at first by inadequate conceptions has been the lot of most great things. Even if writers of the seventeenth century made the union of the believer and the Lord a ' substantial ' one—existing between two mysterious impersonal substances—even if they held, at all events in some cases, that the flesh of the believer and the flesh of Christ are mysteriously united and identified, this ought not to deter us from seeking a more worthy interpretation of the real fact they had in view. There was a day

when it was thought a sufficient definition of electricity to say that it is a property of amber ; that early idea indeed settled how the new phenomenon should be named ; but no one now receives that description as sufficient, or, because it is obsolete, holds that electricity does not exist. What we have to do, therefore, in regard to our present subject, is to put aside the category of 'substance' and try to think out the matter in terms of personality. On the accepted principle of modern philosophy that there are degrees of reality, a personal union must be regarded as infinitely more real than a 'substantial' one.

It is well to recall the fact, however, that the conception of a mystic union is one that in no way depends upon the authority, be it great or small, of post-Reformation systems of theology. Its roots go much deeper in spiritual life, as well as much farther back in Christian history. If the phrase is not in the New Testament, the thing is on every page of St. Paul and St. John. We may take, for example, a startling sentence like that of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians vi. 17 : 'He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit.' As it is said elsewhere of man and wife that they two are one flesh, so, the Apostle implies, a spiritual unity no less real and close in its far higher sphere is established by saving faith between a man and his Redeemer. It is a union that lasts as the other does not, and has effects the other can never have. Again, there is the ever recurrent form 'in Christ,' with its converse 'Christ in you' ; both to be found now

and then almost within the limits of a single verse. How the words 'in Christ' stretch through all time! How they cover not the present merely, but eternity before and after! We were chosen 'in Him' before the foundation of the world; we are made to sit with God in heavenly places 'in Christ'; and all in order that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us 'in Christ Jesus.'[1] The *locus classicus* is of course Galatians ii. 20: 'I am crucified with Christ; and no longer do I live; Christ liveth in me,'[2] where the very breathlessness of the verse betrays the pent-up feeling with which St. Paul wrote it. We can hear the triumph in his voice. He feels as if he had lost his old self, and all but changed his identity. There has been the importation of another's personality into him; the life, the will of Christ has taken over what was once in sheer antagonism to it, and replaced the power of sin by the forces of a divine life. As an old writer quaintly puts it: 'If any one should come to Paul's doors and ask, Who lives here? he would answer, In this body of mine lives not Saul of Tarsus, but Jesus Christ.'[3] What he was had ceased to be, and what remained had a better right to Christ's name than his own. No doubt

[1] Eph. i. 4; ii. 6, 7.

[2] Cf. J. Weiss, *Das Urchristentum* (1917), p. 358.

[3] Cf. Luther, in his exposition of the passage: 'Thou art so entirely and nearly joined to Christ, that He and thou art made as it were one person. . . . As touching my natural life I am dead, and now I live another life. I live not now as Paul, but Paul is dead. Who is it then that lives? The Christian.'

the verse was written at a white heat ; no doubt the Apostle, if he had been cross-examined, would have admitted that he did not mean, after all, that Christ and Paul were so utterly identical as now to be indistinguishable ; but this implies only that language has broken down under an intolerable strain, and that words which at their best must always be general are insufficient to express a fact that has no real parallel or analogy anywhere. It is one thing to assert that a given formula exactly coincides with the reality it represents ; this no one would claim even for a Pauline expression in any connexion whatever. It is another thing to hold that a given formula looks in the direction of absolute truth, and *is infinitely nearer to that truth than its negation would be* ; and this, surely, we may claim here for these passionate apostolic words.

A full discussion of St. Paul's conception of union with Christ, however, would virtually mean the detailed treatment of his entire system of doctrine. His whole view of Redemption is implicitly present in it. It is a spiritual union ; a mutual appropriation and interpenetration of spirit by spirit. The bond between them is sufficiently powerful to support the assignation of the same predicates to both. Our solidarity with Christ is such that in His death we also die ; in His grave we are buried ; with the Risen Lord, and in Him, we too rise to newness of life. Nor can an attentive reader fail to notice that St. Paul's greatest words on the subject of Atonement occur in this connexion.

Romans viii. 1 is typical : ' There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' By faith we have made Christ's death for sin our own, our old man being crucified with Him ; the law therefore has lost its rights over us, for he that has died is justified from sin. If the conception can be put more clearly still, this is done in 2 Corinthians v. 14 : ' We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died.' The sentence of death, executed on the Head, takes effect *eo ipso* on the members, not by a legal transference of *rôle*, but in virtue of a personal incorporation. In such a form of words more than substitution is implied, though there is a hint of substitution also in the statement that ' one died *for* all.' It was His death primarily, theirs only in Him, and through the mediation of faith. The believer has, in the familiar phrase, an interest in Christ's death because he has an interest in Christ Himself, and has so lived himself by faith into Christ's personal being that old things have passed away and all things—including and centring in his old self—have become new. I think most students of the Pauline theology would concede that, wherever its circumference may be, its very heart is here.

St. John, to whom it was given to speak the last and deepest word on the great Christian certainties, repeats still more convincingly the assertion that union with Christ is the secret of redemption. ' This doctrine of a mystical union,' says Professor E. F. Scott, ' in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the

central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel.'[1] It is true that Professor Scott proceeds to argue that a totally unethical and realistic factor enters into the Johannine conception. Metaphysical categories, in his opinion, have ousted the moral and religious categories of earlier Christian thought, or at all events relegated them to a secondary place, all possibility of man's participating in the Divine life being foreclosed until the very constitution of his nature has been radically changed by the infusion of the higher essence present in Christ. But I feel it to be very difficult, if not quite impossible, to reconcile this view with the emphasis which the Evangelist uniformly lays on faith. Clearly the experience of abiding in Christ is represented as conditioned by 'believing,' not in the sense of acquiescence in a prescribed dogma, but as trust in a living Person. This is obviously the conception which pervades the First Epistle of John; there, union with Christ is the result, as well as the basis and foundation, of ethical and spiritual experiences. It is relative to personal apprehension of the 'word of life'; 'if that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father' (ii. 24). So too in the Gospel it is through 'belief' in the sense of spiritual apprehension and self-committal that the impartation of the life which resides in Christ is mediated to His people. As Bernhard Weiss has expressed it: 'The object in which the believer sinks himself when abiding

[1] *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 289.

in His words . . . always is just Christ Himself.'[1] The crowning proof, indeed, that it is a mistake to interpret St. John's symbolic phrases in a literal or realistic sense is the fact that these very phrases, or their equivalents, are used freely by every powerful religious writer to this day, not least by those—like Professor Scott himself[2]—to whom the realistic view is abhorrent.

The images by which St. John expresses union with Christ are familiar to every one. Christ is the Vine, in which His followers are engrafted as living branches. He is the Bread of Life by eating which they live for ever. Just as in St. Paul, the mystic union is contemplated alternately from either side, and can be described equally by the phrases 'ye in Me' and 'I in you.' The former appears to mean that the Christian's life is rooted in Christ and has in Him its encompassing vital element and medium; the second that He Himself is present in His people as the living centre, the animating principle, of their inmost being. Now in all such passages we feel that the distinction between Christology and soteriology, never more than provisional anyhow, has disappeared. Christ is definable as the Person who can thus be our inward Life, while on the other hand it is because He is this Person that His relation to us can be of this interior kind. Personality and possession mutually interpret each other. To sustain this unparalleled relation to men, to impart Himself to them so that they have Him within and can hold

[1] *Der johannische Lehrbegriff*, p. 78. [2] Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 294.

fellowship with Him as with their own souls—this is a capacity or act which we can only construe as specifically Divine. Not only so ; the fellowship thus established with Christ is in express terms set forth as being intrinsically, and purely in itself, fellowship with God. To have the Son is to have the Father also. Precisely identical phrases are employed, in the Gospel and the First Epistle, to signify our relations to God and Christ respectively. In both cases a mutual inherence is affirmed, mediated in each case by the trustful acceptance of 'His word.'[1] The fact that Christ is thus felt to sustain a relation of indwelling in unnumbered souls, to which their indwelling in Him corresponds, points to the real argument for the higher being of Christ which we feel to be implicit in the New Testament as a whole.

Turning now to the doctrinal bearing of this great conception, I should like to put forward the plea that Union to Christ is the fundamental idea in the theory of redemption. It is from this centre alone, as it seems to me, that we can interpret luminously all the problems which gather round justification and sanctification, and which have so often been construed in a way that sacrificed either the moral or the religious interests at stake. The vital union is the pivotal and organising fact. If we start from the experimental certainty of spiritual coalescence between the Redeemer and the redeemed, we can understand some things about the Christian life, and its

[1] St. John xv. 7, 10 ; 1 John iii. 24.

relation to God, which, at least to me, would otherwise remain darkly inscrutable. I do not mean that they cease to be mysteries, but only that they are no longer merely mysteries. Light penetrates them at least a certain way. We can draw lines of interpretation which go so far, and even if we soon have to stop, we can perceive that the lines have a real tendency to converge, and therefore may be presumed to meet somewhere, even if it be beyond our range.

But before we attempt to illustrate the centrality of Union with Christ in the theological scheme, there are two questions of a preliminary kind to be considered. We have already touched on one of these. First, what is meant by the term 'mystical,' and is it legitimate to define it in contrast with 'moral'? Now, as we have seen, no experience is possible to man which gets above ethics, which has not an ethical content or is not fraught with ethical issues. In Principal Denney's words: 'When two persons, two moral natures, are to enter into union with each other, then their union, no matter how intimate and profound it may be, must at the same time be personal and moral. . . . We must not forget that personality lives only in a moral world, and that its most intense and passionate experiences are moral to the core.'[1] But while this is so, I think there are certain aspects of Union with Christ which are insufficiently described by the epithet 'moral,' and which many people have dimly in their minds

[1] *Expositor*, February 1904, p. 156.

when they still hanker for the word 'mystical.' In the first place, they feel that the Union in which they are personally identified with Christ is far and beyond anything they have experienced in their relations to fellow men. To the term 'moral' there always seems to cling a certain externality; it appears to describe and regulate affairs between persons that after all are separate, each possessing the solid rights of independent being, which in many cases it is their duty to assert and enforce. Somehow in our relation to Christ that separateness has disappeared; things happen as if it were no longer there. I do not say it is non-existent, or that there may not be varying degrees of it; but I do say that great saints, who were also great theologians, have felt that language which spoke of its absence was far truer than language which assumed its presence. Hence, while even in our relations to Christ our experiences remain ethical in the sense that it would never be right to call them unethical, yet they are also more than ethical; they are religious. Between the parts of a living body there are always physical and chemical relations, and these the presence of life does not abrogate; yet a rapidly growing number of biologists would also hold that vital interrelations are the highest of all, because they take up the rest into a richer unity, not by destruction or suppression but by transmutation. This analogy may help us believe that there is a real sense in which we may say that Union with Christ is more than moral. It is the experience, or the fact, in

which morality, carried up into its highest and purest form, passes beyond itself. And this is one aspect of the truth, I think, which many have tried to express by the word ' mystic.'

The second aspect is very much akin to the first. Those who plead for the word ' mystic,' and are dissatisfied with the word ' moral,' feel, I think, whether consciously or not, that to describe Union with Christ as moral, and no more, makes no provision, or only a quite insufficient one, for the fundamental truth that the Union is initiated on *His* side and sustained at every point by *His* power. It is a commonplace of the preacher that our hope lies not in our hold of Christ, but in His hold of us ; but is it not just in such certainties, familiar as the sunshine though they be, that the power and glory of the Christian Gospel dwells ? Are we really to say that our connexion with Christ consists in, and is exhausted by, the conscious feelings and motives which pass through our minds ; that if I get up some morning with my soul dead and my gratitude dumb, with faith so darkened that I cannot utter a sincere prayer, my relation to Christ is, for the time being, at an end ? By all means let us beware of construing personal religion in mechanical terms, or of speaking as if the life of God could be passed into the human soul like a stream of electric force ; but do not let us forget that a man is more than his conscious thoughts and feelings, though certainly what he is depends to an indefinite extent on what his conscious thoughts and feelings have been. Not

a few passages in the New Testament suggest that regeneration makes a man Christ's in a deeper fashion than he himself may ever dream. 'We know not what to pray for as we ought,' says the Apostle, 'but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'; the suggested truth being, apparently, that in the Christian there is a Divine presence other than, and yet one with, his own consciousness, a larger and fuller indwelling of the Spirit of Christ than he himself may as yet have awakened to. So again in the great Colossian passage: 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' I have no wish to introduce at this point the idea of 'the subliminal consciousness,' or to suggest categorically that it supplies a sphere within the personal life to which the indwelling of Christ may be assigned; for 'the subliminal consciousness,' as to which our information is so largely hypothetical, threatens to become rather a nuisance to those who care for clear thinking, and is already populous with unsolved mysteries. At the same time, I think part of the truth may lie in that direction; provided we make it clear that the presence of Christ in our life at all, and therefore also in that hidden region of personality, is always mediated by conscious ethical motives on our side.[1] But, however this problem may

[1] To say that Christ dwells also in the buried life of the soul is in no sense to discount the spiritual character of our relation to Him. For that buried life also receives its quality from what goes on in consciousness. It is indeed the permanent deposit of conscious processes. Just as the 'underworld' in a bad man is likewise bad,

finally be solved, at all events the fact that Christ can and does breathe His life into us, taking the first step in this true miracle of a communication of spiritual life, is one aspect of the whole fact which the term 'mystic' is chosen to indicate rather than the term 'moral.'

It may of course be that our conception of personality must be revised before we can make much in a philosophical way of a fact like the mystic union; indeed, some of the most suggestive writers on these topics have begun to point quite clearly towards something of the kind. We are far away now from the point of view of Strauss when he wrote that 'Personality is that selfhood which shuts itself up against everything else, thereby excluding it from itself.'[1] This may be called the adamantine theory of personality; the world of persons, it implies, is best illustrated by a number of marbles in a box, as to which the truest thing we can say is that each of them is utterly and completely outside its neighbour. But thinkers like Dr. Moberly and Professor Lofthouse have outlined a theory which, *primâ facie*, does more justice to the actual experiences of life. 'Personality, in fact,' writes Professor Lofthouse, 'is not exclusive but inclusive. We are persons, that is to say, not by our power of self-isolation, but by our power of transcending that isolation

because his conscious thoughts and feelings are, and have been, bad; so the 'underworld' or subliminal self in a believer is pervaded by Christ because he has turned to Christ in conscious faith and love. This May be no B. of Regen.

[1] *Die christl. Glaubenslehre*, i. p. 504.

and linking ourselves to others, and others to ourselves.'[1] We all know the lines of Matthew Arnold, with their touch of Divine despair :

> Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live *alone*.[2]

But is that the whole truth ? Is it even the best part of the truth ? I do not doubt that those who have tasted the sacred joys of that human love which is our best analogue to religious communion, will feel that impenetrable solitude of spirit is not the deepest thing in us. On the contrary, it is possible, in some real degree, to escape from ourselves, and mingle in love and thought and will in the lives of others. And if, as Lotze has so impressively argued, personality in us is incomplete, and exists perfectly in God only, may we not say that this self-communicating power which we possess only in part will have its perfection and fulness in Him, and therefore also in Christ who is God apprehensible by us ? And since this interpenetration, if it is real at all, is reciprocal, may we not find that it is only an extension of principles already implied in our social existence as human beings when we go on to speak of a true solidarity of life, a spiritual coalescence, between Christ and His people ?

It is of no slight importance to bring out clearly the fact that the Union we are speaking of is, as

[1] *Ethics and Atonement*, p. 117. [2] *To Marguerite—continued.*

I have just said, a Union between Christ *and His people.* For various writers, like Erskine of Linlathen and Maurice in a past generation, and Dr. Moberly in our own, have asserted rather a Union between Christ and the race. As Maurice unequivocally puts it : ' The truth is that every man is in Christ . . . except He were joined to Christ he could not think, breathe, live a single hour.' [1] And in the same way Moberly dwells on ' this mutual inherence, this spiritual indwelling, whereby humankind is summed anew, and included, in Christ.' [2] Is this the teaching of the New Testament ? No one would say that it is Johannine, and careful exegesis seems to prove that just as little is it Pauline. Can it be maintained seriously that when St. Paul wrote, ' There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' he meant that there is now no condemnation for any man ? But, apart from this, to say that the race is in Christ is to say something that has no relation to experience. One can understand what is meant by a Christ who is vitally one with believers ; for this is interpreted to us by first-hand acquaintance with the Christian life, and the psychological coefficients involved in it can be pointed out. But if we refuse to depersonalise Christ, or to think away the ethical qualities revealed in His career on earth, the statement that He is vitally one with all men, even a Caesar Borgia, becomes, I submit, quite unintelligible.

[1] *Life and Letters*, vol. i. p. 156.
[2] *Atonement and Personality*, p. 90.

The tendency of such a view, in short, is to bring salvation down to the level of a natural process. We are in Christ just as our bodies are in the atmosphere, and in either case we may undergo the specific effects of the encompassing medium without knowing it. Can salvation be kept spiritual on such terms? Are ethical experiences, are faith and love, of so little value that it matters nothing to redemption whether they enter into it or not? One feels that there is something wrong somewhere; and in the minds of those who resort to these more sweeping and universal expressions a consciousness of this seems at times to stir faintly. This is shown by the qualifications which are sure, in the long run, to be inserted here or there. All men are one with Christ, it is said, at least ideally, or implicitly, or potentially. But when we scrutinise these adverbs closely, it turns out that what they mean is not that men are in Christ simply in virtue of their being men, but only that so far as God's will of love is concerned, or their own constitution, there is no reason at all why through faith they should not be in Christ. It is worth while to note, ere we leave this point, that to deny that all men are in Christ is not the same thing as saying that they have no relation to Him at all.[1]

[1] I mean that 'in Christ' is a New Testament phrase, with a quite clearly defined significance. It denotes that any one who can be spoken of as being 'in Christ' is saved in virtue of that union. This is what the expression implies properly, as a designation of the believer's relationship to the Lord; and in accordance with the right usage of words it ought not to be wasted on any

In conclusion, a few words may be said upon the centrality of the mystic union in the organism of Christian doctrine.

1. As to the Atonement. The difficulty that has always counted for most here has been the difficulty of perceiving how the expiatory suffering of one person could benefit, or avail for, any other. And if Christ were just one more human individual, as separate from us as we are from each other, this objection undoubtedly would be fatal, alike from the standpoint of logic and morality. But if, with St. Paul, we refuse to think of Christ as one isolated person, and the Christian as another, then the representative action of Christ in His sacrifice becomes quite another thing. The union, just because it is a union, has two sides. His self-identification with us involves consequences for Him, and it involves consequences for us. I venture to quote, as the best statement known to me of this point of view, a few sentences from a

lower idea. It ought not to be natural to those who take their religion from the New Testament to say that—in the right sense of the words—a man who hates or despises the Cross is nevertheless 'in Christ.' But to insist on this truth is not to lift man as such away from any and every relation to the Exalted Lord. Though a man may resent the very thought of it, Christ is still seeking him, blessing him, gathering round him all the appealing influences of the Kingdom of God on earth. And from that universality of living power and sufficiency, which resides in Christ always—yesterday, to-day and for ever—may spring up at any moment the spiritual redemptive relationship of personal indwelling. This seems to be truer to the facts of New Testament religion and personal experience than to say that all men are in Christ by birth, and continue to be in Him unless they definitely thrust themselves out by unbelief.

sermon by Professor W. M. Macgregor. 'Jesus,' he writes, 'who sought in all things to be one with His brethren, emboldens us to seek in faith for oneness with Himself; and in virtue of that mystical union our pardon is secured. As He associated Himself with us, so we associate ourselves with Him both in His doing and in His suffering. We make His confession ours; the homage due to the righteous will of God, which we cannot render of ourselves, we find in Him. We have no desire to stand apart, living out our lives in ways of our own; we wish to be found in Him, and judged only in relation to Him.'[1] The false step in many theories of Atonement, I feel, is that they first abstract the Christian from Christ, and then find it hard, naturally, to put them back into such a oneness that what He did and is affects our relation to God. But if all Christian theology, by its very nature, is an interpretation of believing experience from the inside, oneness with Christ is our *punctum stans*, and the attempt to put it in abeyance is illegitimate. We do not have to prove it, or to make a doctrine of the Atonement apart from it; we assume it rather, and seek to draw out its implications for the sinner.

2. As to Christian morality. 'The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount,' said the late Dr. Dale, 'have their root in the mystical relations between

[1] *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, pp. 74-75. Cf. Luther (*ut supra*): 'Thou may'st boldly say, I am now one with Christ, that is to say, Christ's righteousness, victory and life are mine. And again, Christ may say, I am that sinner, that is, his sins and his death are Mine, because he is united and joined unto Me, and I unto him.'

Christ and His people.'[1] If we have forgiveness in Christ, we have also holiness in Him. We cannot join ourselves to Him by faith, so admitting Him to heart and life, without thereby receiving into our being the germ and principle of perfection.[2] The moral resources of life are now in Christ. This is an experimental truth, against which the argument of this or that man that he does not have any such experience has no cogency. Men do pass out of themselves to make the will of Christ theirs and their will His ; having died with Him they also live with Him. In Him they share the relationship of sons of God, and are supported in the struggle with self and evil by His sympathy and communion. They share, they really share, His conflict and His triumph. Not only is it true that the law of life that is in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death, but they partake in His service to the world. As members of His body they are His hands and His feet, doing His will for men.

3. As to truth of the Christian Gospel. The consciousness of Union with Christ—a fact as real as the consciousness of right and wrong—is the greatest apologetic asset of the Church. It is unaffected by controversies as to the date or authorship of documents, though it has a very direct bearing on the question of the truth of their message. It is unaffected by differences of doctrinal interpretation. And as we look around us,

[1] *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 12.

[2] Cf. Simpson, *Fact of Christ*, p. 163 f.—a noble passage.

in the society of believers in Jesus, and mark the beauty and devotion of character displayed in thousands of His people, it is the mere instinct of truth to say, 'We know that He is alive from the dead, for He lives in them.'

VII *The Philosophical Presuppositions of Ritschlianism*[1]

THE present paper endeavours to review the most important presuppositions of a philosophical kind upon which the theological edifice known as Ritschlianism has been raised. No one can deny that the school of Ritschl is at once the most interesting and the most conspicuous feature of the theological landscape at the present moment, and that the contributions which its members have made to the religious thought of our time are fitted to enrich in a singular degree the intellectual heritage of Christian thinkers. It is all the more essential

[1] This paper appeared in the *American Journal of Theology*, January 1899. I have ventured to reprint it, virtually in its original form, although many of its points would now be otherwise expressed and the perspective of the subject as a whole has changed. Not the Ritschlian theology, which has taught this generation so much, is the topic of discussion, but the Kantian or Lotzian theory of knowledge with which Ritschl buttressed it. This was really for him an afterthought: he was apt to work out his methodology, not always felicitously, after putting his methods in operation. And his early statements on the doctrine of value-judgments were in fact exposed to just such criticisms as I have offered. Later interpretations by members of his school, especially by Reischle in his *Werturtheile und Glaubensurtheile*, have strengthened the more vulnerable points. They emphasise the character of faith as a definite mode of apprehension and exhibit clearly the objective reality of spiritual values.

that the metaphysical assumptions which have to bear the weight of a superstructure so imposing should be carefully and critically analysed. A fragmentary sketch of such an analysis and criticism will be found in the pages which follow, where we shall be occupied, not so much with the Ritschlian theology in itself, as with the philosophical avenue which conducts us to it.

The exposition of the Ritschlian theory possesses one paradoxical aspect which must always have provoked remark. Every one is aware that the general thesis maintained by Ritschl and his followers is the entire independence of reason which faith enjoys, the right of religious belief to cast off the chill and confining influences of philosophy. They adopt the plan, therefore, of persuading philosophy to abdicate at the bidding of her own fundamental principles. And so it comes about that there are no books in the world in which more technical metaphysics are to be found than those which the most prominent Ritschlians have written. Herrmann's *Die Religion* is a kind of modernised *Critique of Pure Reason*. If the truth really be as they say, one is forced to conclude that only a trained metaphysician has any right to believe it. Philosophy must be brought in somewhere and somehow : if not as a factor in the scientific expression of faith, at least as a medicinal preparative for those who wish to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them.

It need hardly be said that the Ritschlian scheme of thought is opposed to the general trend of the

history of dogmatic system-building. The practice of most theologians of repute, when embarking on their enterprises in divinity, has been to justify the existence of systematic theology by an appeal to considerations of a more or less philosophical kind. The demand for rational unity without which intelligence cannot be conceived, the inconsequence of any abrupt cessation of reflective synthesis, the necessity for thought of some criterion which will distinguish the true elements of religious experience from the false—such things as these are peremptory. And, *primâ facie*, the theologians are right. For in dealing with its subject-matter, theology claims to possess no special organ of knowledge by an appeal to which inconvenient questions may be evaded. It works with the ordinary instruments of reflection. No doubt valuable results can be expected only from those who sympathise with the aspirations of faith ; but the same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of aesthetics or morals.

Now, religious experience has a cognitive side. The judgments of faith claim to be true of a reality, of a system of things, existing quite independently of our interest in it. And to conceive this world of divine and spiritual being at all, we require conceptions which are metaphysical if they are anything. How else can we describe such notions as self-consciousness, or end, or cause ? A theologian may repudiate the meaning assigned to terms like these by a dominant philosophy, but the modifications he may propose leave them as metaphysical

as ever. Both theology and philosophy, again, are bound to discuss such questions as the possibility of miracle, or the theoretical efficacy of proofs for the existence of God. And while the argument in each case may take a different route, there is no difference of kind between the principles they apply, the criteria they seek to conform to, or the notion of truth which obtains in each department. Christian theology has refused, and refused rightly, to submit to the tyranny of any particular system of metaphysics, or to use those terms exclusively which might be licensed by the philosophy of the day. But it has done so from no aversion to the *method* of philosophy, which it accepts as its own, but from the conviction that the system in question has done violence to certain elements in faith by forcing them into logical formulas too narrow for their content.

Ritschlian thinkers, however, absolutely decline to acquiesce in the relations which have hitherto subsisted between dogmatic theology and metaphysics. They believe that, if we define the limits of the two with accuracy, they may live together in the same mind, on a basis of peaceful neutrality. The old opposition of faith and knowledge is a true one, and needs to be applied inflexibly all along the line. It is even possible to pronounce two contradictory judgments on the nature of reality, according to the *rôle* we elect to fill; for in Herrmann's unequivocal words, 'the difficulty of the religious problem is not one whit lessened or increased whether the dogmatic metaphysics

which the Christian follows is built on materialistic or idealistic lines.'[1] Religious knowledge as such is entirely independent of theoretical cognition. The starting-point of the former is *sui generis*. And, while Ritschl wavered considerably, in his different editions, on the point whether we ought to seek ultimately to unite the conclusions of reason and faith, Herrmann has no scruples on the matter, and denounces any such attempt as a treachery to religion. The limits of cognition must be fixed once for all; beyond them lies the province of faith. No question of faith must ever be taken for trial to the court of reason; the verdicts of reason have no authority in the realm of faith. It is his attempt to disarm the criticism of philosophy by changing the *venue* that forms the characteristic mark of Ritschl's theology.

The first part of our author's theory, therefore, is of a negative character, since, to make room for belief, knowledge must first of all be abolished. The second part easily surpasses the first in interest and importance, containing as it does his reasoned and explicit opinions on the subject of *value-judgments* as the proper instrument of theological knowledge. While there are adumbrations of a similar theory of the fundamental significance of the conception of *worth* in theology to be found in the works of Kant, Schleiermacher, and others, yet to Ritschl and Kaftan is due the prominence which the conception has attained in modern thought. Now, as it is through judgments of

[1] *Die Metaphysik in der Theologie*, pp. 16, 17.

value that faith escapes into the region of the supersensuous and Divine, as we have Ritschl's plain declaration that 'it is the task of theology to guard the peculiarity of the thought of God—that it ought to be expressed in judgments of value only,'[1] it is obviously our interest to study the second part of his theory with great care. The first half of his apologetics is a semi-Kantian theory of knowledge of no particular merit or originality; the other half, containing his exposition of the value-judgment, is intended to revolutionise theology. Besides, while writers like Herrmann and Kaftan diverge widely from Ritschl, in their method of demonstrating the impotence of knowledge to deal with matters of faith, they join hands with him in declaring that the idea of worth is our only guide to the spiritual world. After a very brief account of Ritschl's theory of knowledge, therefore, we shall turn more especially to his theory of faith, and in the course of our discussion of this latter point we shall be able to embrace the most important thinkers of the school in a single view.

In a well-known passage of his *Theologie und Metaphysik*[2] Ritschl vehemently denies that he has any wish to exclude metaphysics entirely from theology. The theologian, he considers, cannot, as a scientific thinker, dispense with a theory of knowledge which may furnish him with the formal conceptions or categories necessary for the work

[1] *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, 3te. Auflage, iii. p. 214.
[2] *T. u. M.*, 2te. Auflage, p. 48.

of rationalising experience. The highest category of metaphysics, however, is that of *thing* or substance; and this carries with it the fatal consequence that, from the metaphysical point of view, we can ascribe to spirit no superiority over nature. They are both substances, and, so far, stand upon one level. The introduction of philosophy into theology has had the result—to take the most grievous example—that the word God has been understood as equivalent to the unity of the world-substance, and thus a relic of the Aristotelian metaphysics has been substituted for the far deeper meaning attached by Christianity to the Divine. This unhappy consequence could not, in the circumstances, be avoided, for metaphysics have no room for the conception of conscious personality, and must, from the very nature of the case, be blind to the *worth* of spiritual life.

Now, in charging metaphysic with indifference to the distinction in value between spirit and nature, Ritschl appears to me to be guided, or rather misguided, by the resolve to identify it completely with the theory of knowledge. It is perfectly true that epistemology as such has nothing to do with questions of the value of an object for the self: for its purposes an object is simply an object known, not an object appreciated. But if we refuse to identify these two philosophical disciplines, as Ritschl persists in doing, it remains possible for us to hold that metaphysic, in its survey of our experience as a whole, is bound to include all the distinctions on which that experience

rests, and among them the distinction of value or worth. Otherwise we should be forced to adopt the strange conclusion that the ultimate philosophy must remain entirely silent on the subject of our moral and aesthetic beliefs.

One or two of the more salient features of the Ritschlian theory of knowledge may be briefly noticed. After a rapid summary and criticism of the epistemological views of Plato and Kant, Ritschl professes his agreement with the positions arrived at by Lotze. The value of this confession of epistemological faith, however, depends on the meaning it receives when expanded. It is possible, I think, to discover two widely separate lines of thought in his subsequent exposition. The one is guided by a method essentially psychological, and leads to a purely subjective idealism; the other, betraying itself at intervals, is suggestive of a naïve and uncritical realism. The study of Ritschl's writings, indeed, leaves on the reader's mind the impression that he had not clarified his theory of knowledge sufficiently; for he habitually uses language which must be interpreted in a subjectivistic sense, but which he sets aside without compunction when the need for realistic expression becomes urgent.

Let me illustrate what I have called Ritschl's psychological method, first, by his explanation of the way in which we come to believe in the *unity* of a thing. We call an object a *single* object, he tells us, simply because, amid the changing perceptions we have of it, we are conscious of the unity

of the self.[1] The impulse which prompts us to apply the category of unity to a group of phenomena comes from the subjective side. We are not to suppose that the phenomena themselves force us to conceive them as forming an individual thing. Now, it is clear that Ritschl has here fixed his attention solely on the contents of consciousness. He does not recognise the fact that ideas inform us of what is happening beyond the limits of our single mind, whether we attend to it or not. His explanation, too, is not explanatory. For the self is always one, and always knows itself as one, however its perceptions may change, but we do not regard every group of phenomena we perceive as an individual. We must wait for some cue to be given us from without, for some quality of the sensational elements which calls for the category of oneness. Knowledge is not spun from the inside of the mind ; it is subject to the constraint of fact. But Ritschl systematically ignores this trans-subjective reference which ideas always carry with them, and will not permit the circumstance that ideas are symbols of reality to interfere with his theory of perception. It is one aspect of his attempt to empty the external world into the human mind.

Again, when we turn to his account of the conception of *cause*, we are met by another instance of his method of confining knowledge to the intra-conscious standpoint, and manufacturing cognition out of elements purely subjective. He regards it

[1] *T. u. M.*, p. 38.

as a mistake of the popular view of things to differentiate between cause and effect, or to interpose any interval of time between them, for, to use his own words, 'when we think effects rightly, we think the cause in the effect.' The particular case of causation in which Ritschl is specially interested is that of religious experience, where God is the cause of the effects in us. The effects, such as love, contrition, etc., are modifications of our consciousness, and the result of applying the above formula to them is to yield the conclusion, 'we know God *only* in His effects upon us.'[1] Unless we confine our apprehension of God in this way to our own ideas, he considers that we have no guarantee of religious certainty. He claims, indeed, that his theological method is a revival of Schleiermacher's analysis of the individual religious consciousness. But, surely, to forbid us to move beyond the intrasubjective domain is to convert knowledge into introspection, and to divest religious faith of all its objective meaning. The religious consciousness, when unsophisticated by theories of its own nature, infallibly regards the Divine Spirit as the cause of the experiences of piety—a cause, too, which is other than its effects and independent of them. It knows God, not as Ritschl would say, *in* his effects alone, but *through* them. Religious minds do not first examine certain phenomena of their inner life, and conclude from a study of them to the nature of God, any more than in conversation with a friend our

[1] *T. u. M.*, p. 49.

attention lingers first upon the vocal sounds he utters. We go, of course, directly to the thoughts which his words signify, and in the same way the religious impulse is to look away beyond itself and know the Divine object immediately. Our knowledge of the spiritual world comes to us necessarily *through* our immediate experience, but we cannot convert this straightway into a preliminary investigation of our subjective states. If God is to be found solely in certain effects in us, we must ascribe to Him a merely intramental existence, for these effects as such are nothing but conditions of our consciousness. And if we adopt Ritschl's reading of the matter, we can see clearly enough how Feuerbach could define religion as the worship of our own being. If it is merely a vulgar error to place the cause at an earlier point of time than the effect—that is, in more general terms, to make the effect significant of something other than itself—the limits of the individual mind can never be transcended. Carry Ritschl's ruling principle out to its logical issue, and we find that man, condemned to self-observation alone, becomes and remains the centre of religion ; the whole universe of piety revolves about the particular self. Bender has only extended the subjective method when he affirms : ' Not God but man is the central element in faith ; man is the sun round which circles the world of religious thought.' [1] But we escape from conclusions so paradoxical when we recollect the simple truth that religious experience, like every

[1] *Das Wesen der Religion*, pp. 71, 78

other, carries with it a theory of its own origin. It refers us beyond itself to the source of those impulses which have translated themselves into the ideas and feelings of piety. We can see already, from the point we have reached, how natural it will be for Ritschl, in harmony with his idealistic view of knowledge, to resolve religious cognition into judgments which appeared to some readers to express, not objective existences, but the values which the ideas of them have for the believing mind.

Let us take one more example of the procedure I have styled psychological, this time our author's doctrine of the self. Here, too, he is faithful to the tendency we have noticed above, to resolve the object of discussion into elements which can be phenomenalised—elements, that is to say, which actually present themselves as part of the stream of consciousness. His first step is to assign supreme importance to the active aspect of the ego; indeed, it would hardly be too much to say that for Ritschl the notions of self and will are identical. Other functions of the ego are construed as auxiliary to will, inasmuch as they furnish materials for its realisation. But when we seek an answer to the question, 'What, then, does he mean by will?' we are forced to conclude that, when rigorously interpreted, he tends to decompose it into its phenomenal manifestations. Will becomes for him simply a compendious name for the series of voluntary acts. 'We know nothing,' he declares roundly, 'of an in-itself of the soul, of

a self-inclosed life of spirit behind or beyond its functions.'[1] He ascribes reality, that is, only to what can be apprehended by self-observation, and since the noumenal self, as the subject of knowledge, cannot be made the object of direct intuition, its existence is denied. The ego falls asunder into its particular active experiences. But the functions of the self are many: in what sense can Ritschl call it a unity? It can be one, surely, for the eye of a spectator alone, or as the purely formal unity of consciousness, the needle-eye of experience through which all threads must pass. The constituents of conscious life all cross one another at this point, but they flow on in ceaseless change, and if there exists no permanent self as their ground and their guide, the spring of moral action and the continuity of character are gone. Here again we must reject a method which fails to conduct us to real existence, and leaves us in the shadowland of floating ideas. Unless the mind is in immediate contact with reality somewhere, unless we are right in construing trans-subjectively the cognitive elements of consciousness, whether they refer to the self or the not-self, there is nothing for it but to resign ourselves to the tender mercies of Hume.

Ritschl turns, at last, from the introductory task of negative criticism, and sets out to replace the current conceptions of theology by others more agreeable to his subjectivistic theory of knowledge. We have seen how persistently he holds the mind

[1] *R. u. V.*, iii. p. 21.

to the intraconscious point of view; how he rejects, when he is most logical, every kind of realistic interpretation of ideas. We cannot know things as they are apart from actual perception; the scholastic distinction between things-in-themselves and their action upon us is antiquated and mistaken; we know a good deal about predicates, effects, and perceptions, but we must ask no questions about subjects, or causes, or things perceived. His task now is to throw religious knowledge into a form which harmonises with these presuppositions, to prove—so contemporary critics, not quite unnaturally, felt—that faith does not concern itself about the independently real existence of its objects, but looks only to the value for the self of this or that reality, when drawn down to the subjective level. In matters of faith Ritschl advises us to exercise prudence, and not stir beyond what we immediately experience. Herrmann only throws the same opinion into a striking aphorism when he declares: 'For religion the real is not that which can be explained, but that which can be experienced.'[1]

How, then, does Ritschl actually define religion, and what does he take to be its idea and its end? 'The distinction of worth,' he tells us in an important passage, 'is of no significance for the metaphysical theory of the universe, whereas the religious view of the world depends on the fact that man distinguishes himself in worth in some measure from the phenomena which surround

[1] *Die Religion*, p. 114.

him.'[1] Religion thus rests primarily upon a certain relation between man and the world. Faith steps in to solve the contradiction between the claims of spirit and the relentlessness of nature. In man's helpless plight religion intervenes, revealing to him the existence of transcendent spiritual powers through whose aid he is enabled to cope with the pressure of the natural world.

I think that Ritschl habitually does himself injustice when he attempts to elucidate the fundamental idea of religion. He appears to me to understate the opinions which he actually held on this subject, and which come to the surface instinctively in many parts of his writings devoted to other themes. One would hardly gather, indeed, from the official passages which deal with the topic, that his views of the ideal nature of religious faith were so high and spiritual as we know them to have been. For the outcome of these passages is simply that religion is a product of the struggle for existence; to use his own words, 'Religion is the spiritual instrument which man possesses to free himself from the natural conditions of his life.'[2] Such a theory is not so much false as altogether inadequate. It is based upon an examination of religious phenomena which belong to the lower rather than the highest stages of human development. It interprets faith in the light rather of its beginning than of its end. Not only so, but since religion arises to solve a contradiction—between man and nature—and depends for its

[1] *T. u. M.*, p. 9. [2] *R. u. V.*, iii. p. 174 (edition 1874).

very life upon this opposition, the reconciliation of the opposing terms would sound the death knell of faith. In the limiting case of a perfect harmony between the spirit of man and its natural environment the need for devotion would have disappeared. If the idea of God is nothing more than a *Hilfsbegriff*, as Ritschl's theory implies, then union with God is not something without which man is essentially inadequate to his idea, but a mere necessity of his present unfortunate situation. The revolutionary inferences which follow thus unavoidably from his premises have been drawn with merciless fidelity by Bender, Ritschl's most extreme and most superficial disciple. And yet, if any such account of the fundamental motive and impulse of religion be true, the highest reaches of devout and reverent feeling are an insoluble mystery. At the supreme level attained in the Psalms, or in the Epistles of St. Paul, communion with God is passionately sought for its own sake alone, and the religious consciousness repels ardently the insinuation that in turning to God in prayer and fellowship the soul is animated by any ulterior motive or desire, even that of moral improvement. But if the *form* of religious experience be conceived with Ritschl as essentially determined by the two factors, nature and man, the yearning for God must wear to the last the aspect of a means to a further end.

And now we have reached the stage at which it becomes necessary to examine with care the function and significance which Ritschl ascribes to value-judgments, as the only legitimate instrument and

expression of religious knowledge. It is this half of his theory which has had a history in the formation and rapid development of the school known by his name.

The all-important question, then, is this: How does religious differ from theoretical cognition? The difference, in Ritschl's view, is not to be found in the *object*,[1] for both kinds of knowledge deal with the world, and both, though from divergent motives, seek to comprehend the world as a whole. The distinction lies rather in the sphere of the *subject*. In what characteristic of the self does the root of the difference lie? In this, that the self may appropriate the sensations or ideas which arise in consciousness in one of two ways. 'On the one hand, *in the feeling of pleasure or pain they are determined according to their value for the self.* . . . In the feeling of pleasure or pain the ego affirms for itself whether a sensation which affects the self-feeling serves to heighten or depress it,' that is, it passes a value-judgment upon it. 'On the other hand, the sensation is referred through the idea (of it) to its cause,' *i.e.*, a theoretical judgment is pronounced upon it. These two functions of the ego always act simultaneously, though in their combination one or the other may predominate at different times. Ritschl proceeds to discriminate between those value-judgments which are merely *concomitant* and those which are *independent*. The former turn out to be nothing more than that running commentary of pleasurable

[1] *R. u. V.*, iii. pp. 195 ff.

interest which accompanies the exercise of the cognitive faculty ; we cannot come to know without, at least in some degree, desiring to know. The latter class are more important for our purpose, for to them belong the judgments of faith. Ritschl expresses himself most concisely on this point when he says : 'Religious knowledge manifests itself in independent value-judgments which have to do with the attitude of man to the world and call forth feelings of pleasure and pain in which man either enjoys the dominion over the world which Divine aid has vouchsafed him, or experiences with pain the lack of God's aid to that end.' And thus he comes finally to declare that 'knowledge of God is demonstrably religious knowledge only when God is conceived in the relation of assuring to believers that position in the world which overbalances its hindrances. . . . To be sure, it is maintained that we must know the being of God in order that we may affirm His value for us : on the contrary, *we know the being of God only within His value for us.*'[1]

If we now go back to a passage which was quoted above, we shall be able to understand better what it implies. 'Sensations (or ideas) are determined according to their value for the self in the feeling of pleasure and pain.' A value-judgment, if we take these words strictly, is really a report upon the pleasure or pain which a certain idea excites in the mind ; it is not so far a proposition about an independently real object of knowledge. It moves

[1] *R. u. V.*[3], iii. p. 202 ; cf. pp. 376 and 558.

and has its being wholly within the subjective domain, and simply affirms the worth of an idea for us, according as it heightens or lowers the self-feeling. That is to say, *feeling is the value-norm*, and an idea should logically stand higher or lower in the scale of worth as it excites in us more or less pleasure. In such a judgment we may assert, indeed, the value, the transcendent value, of the idea of God, but so far we can say nothing whatever of God as He exists apart from our idea of Him. But if the worth, and consequently the religious truth, even of the conception of the Divine depends on its capacity to stimulate our pleasurable consciousness, where are we to find a criterion which will secure that the highest of all ideas shall not be the prey of individual caprice ?* Kaftan evidently feels that every assurance must be offered that the judgments of faith repose upon some other foundation than the arbitrary decision of the single mind, and that they represent objective matters of fact. His repeated protestations on the subject suggest a fear lest the argumentations of Ritschl might seem to imperil the objective validity of theological propositions, and the anxiety of a convinced disciple to remove apprehensions on so vital a point.

I do not think that those who have discussed the foundations of the Ritschlian epistemology have bestowed sufficient attention on the fact that feeling (as pleasure or pain) is erected by Ritschl into the criterion of religious value-judgments. No doubt, if we argue solely from his general

allusions to the conditions and significance of morality, we should expect him to reason thus: The good is, as such, supremely valuable. If man is seriously to will what is good, and to believe in the possibility of its realisation, he must have faith in God. What ought to be can and must be, and to bring it into being there must exist a moral Ruler of the world. But his definite theory on the subject, as we have just seen, is something very different. Feeling is the norm which determines the value of an idea for us. Nor does it seem possible to interpret his language in the sense that feeling is merely a *thermometer*, so to speak, but not strictly a measure, of worth; his words are too unambiguous for that. And thus Scheibe, in his sympathetic exposition of Ritschl's system, does him no injustice when he sums up the gist of it in these words: 'Religious knowledge is given by value-judgments upon that which God is for us, *i.e. by the feelings of pleasure which we connect with the thought of God*.'[1] But if feeling is to be made the norm of the judgments of faith in this thorough-going fashion, the most

[1] *Die Bedeutung der Werturtheile für das religiöse Erkennen*, p. 11. Ritschl, it may be conjectured, learned this from Lotze, who wrote: 'The two expressions, "to be good" and "to be pleasing" . . . designate exactly one and the same thing. There is nothing at all in the world, which would have any value until it has produced some pleasure in some being or other capable of enjoyment. . . . There is such a thing as moral judgment of conduct only upon the assumption that this conduct leads to pleasure or pain' (*Practical Philosophy*, pp. 18-19, 33). Value, for Lotze, lies wholly in the feeling of satisfaction or of pleasure which we derive from the object to which it belongs.

capricious and unworthy conceptions of God can claim as much truth as the purest and most ideal, and theology becomes infected throughout with the individual subjectivity of Hedonism.

If feeling is the standard of value-judgments, it becomes clearer than ever that religion must centre round man. 'Religious cognition consists of judgments of worth which have to do with the attitude of man to the world.' Feeling must be sheltered from disturbance, and maintained at a positive level; and since human powers are inadequate to such a task, the aid of heaven must be invoked. But may it not be said that the difficulties from which men thus seek to be rescued are, above all, difficulties of a *moral* kind? True, but we must recollect that, for Ritschl, moral judgments are a subdivision of independent value-judgments, and thus in their turn dependent on the feeling of pleasure and pain. He is absolutely debarred from the appeal to moral convictions of a distinctly categorical character which rest not on feeling, but on conscience. This way of escape lies open to Herrmann, but Ritschl cannot resort to it except at a sacrifice of self-consistency.

For our present purpose it will be sufficient to indicate in a word the positions relative to Ritschl taken up by Herrmann and Kaftan, his most distinguished followers. The family characteristic which attaches to each of these kindred systems of thought is that religion is brought by each into a fundamental and exclusive dependence upon judgments of worth. It is of very little importance

whether we say, with Kaftan and Herrmann, that faith-propositions *rest on*, or with Ritschl, that they *consist in*, judgments of worth. The distinction is purely formal: in every case the thesis set up and defended is that our apprehension of those ideas which most concern us as religious men rests exclusively on the feeling of value. Of course, a great deal more is meant by this than the truth that religious knowledge deals with objects which are of supreme value for humanity. These writers go much farther. They contend that faith affirms the existence of what is supremely valuable, exclusively on the ground of its being so. Reason finds the ground of knowledge in the constraint of objective fact, and the ultimate ideal of truth in the conception of an articulated system of experience. Faith finds the ground, and the only valid ground, of belief in the transcendent worth of its object.[1]

But at this point Herrmann diverges from Ritschl and Kaftan. The two latter theologians conceive the personality, which has to be maintained against the world, whose claim upon life and happiness has to be satisfied, as constituted ultimately by feeling. For them the spring and source of religious thought and action is the impulse to preserve intact the feeling of self. Herrmann, on the other hand, as an out-and-out Kantian, conceives the personality which is to overcome the world as determined essentially by the moral law. Indeed, he does not hesitate to say: 'The content of the moral law

[1] But see what is said, lower down (p. 147), about revelation.

is personality.'[1] The indispensable characteristic of a personal life is subjection to the categorical imperative, and the fundamental postulate of all religious faith is that there must be a God, if a refractory world is not to overwhelm and annihilate the moral aspirations of man. Plainly enough these two views are as wide as the poles asunder in their fundamental features. In the one case religion rests upon belief in a power which makes for happiness and brings to nought the opposing force of natural conditions; in the other religion depends on faith in a power on whose gracious co-operation man can depend in his struggle to realise the moral ideal.

One is haunted, when reading the writings of the Ritschlians, by the feeling that they have failed as yet to make out the objectivity of the norm or standard by which judgments of value are to be criticised. If religious ideas and sentiments make their appeal to feeling alone, who shall decide when feelings disagree? *De gustibus non disputandum*: each man's capacity for feeling becomes the measure of the supersensuous world. In the domain of morals, at any rate, we cannot rest satisfied with so subjectively determined a criterion of conduct. There we instinctively regard the norm of ideal action as independent of the fortuitous susceptibility of the individual mind. We approve of an action because the ideal standard has in some degree been satisfied; we do not conclude from the fact of our approval to the

[1] *Die Religion*, p. 240.

satisfaction of the norm. The standard which we bring to the examination of the person or action concerned attaches itself to an objective quality of the given fact. And we cannot escape from this consideration by saying, with Kaftan, that a value-judgment expresses merely a relation which we as living beings occupy to the represented object,[1] for this is to open the doors of practical philosophy to the weary paralogisms of the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge.

But if the norm be objective, it cannot be defined in terms of feeling alone, as is done by Ritschl and Kaftan. It is doubtless true that we cannot be susceptible of the worth of an object without in some degree being suffused with pleasurable consciousness. Yet, on the other hand, we are well aware—and upon such a point a man's own consciousness is the last court of appeal—that the excellence and dignity we ascribe to an ideal of any kind are in no way dependent upon the amount of pleasure it may yield us, either at a particular moment or throughout the whole of life. If Scheibe, consequently, is right in saying that 'religious knowledge is given by the feelings of pleasure and pain which we connect with the idea of God,' it is clear how wavering and inconstant must be our apprehension of the Divine. But there is little use of pursuing this line of criticism farther. What we have in this theory is obviously the old Hedonistic doctrine once more. Religious Eudaemonism has risen into life again in the systems

[1] *Das Wesen der christlichen Religion*, p. 42.

of Ritschl and Kaftan, disguised on this occasion under the new rubric of value-judgments, but its inadequacy to interpret the moral and religious experience of man is as patent as ever. We must answer, as has been answered before, that a pleasant state of consciousness cannot be at once identified with the judgment that an object has positive value, nor pain with the judgment that the object has negative worth. There are passages in Herrmann where he seems inclined to follow the same route, and he does place at the centre of all things the self-feeling (*Selbstgefühl*) to the satisfaction of which both religion and morality minister as means.[1] But these are negligible infidelities to his real Kantianism, and to his true and vigorously enforced contention that the value-standard we apply to the judgments of faith must be based upon the absolute *a priori* character of the moral law, and that nothing can be permitted to rank as religious knowledge which does not serve to perfect moral personality.

Another great difficulty which outsiders have found in the Ritschlian system, and which forms the burden of complaint in most of the critical writing directed against it, is the lack of anything like proof that value-judgments really transcend the limits of subjective persuasion. If we make explicit the syllogism which lies at the basis of Ritschlianism, it runs somewhat as follows : What is of (supreme) religious value is real. God is of (supreme) religious value, *ergo* God exists. The

[1] *Die Religion*, p. 146.

argument depends for its very existence upon the previous conclusion that intellectual experience has utterly failed to bring us within sight of the Divine. Faith must cast off the last shred of connexion with knowledge; Herrmann, indeed, takes great pains to make it clear beyond all possibility of doubt that faith is concerned with a reality absolutely dissevered from the real which is given in knowledge, and that to attempt to unite the two is nothing short of sacrilege. 'For Christianity,' he says, 'there is no identical ground of morality and nature.'[1] Faith thus *contradicts* knowledge, instead of going on before it as an advance guard, to occupy tracts of being as yet incompletely subdued by the labours of rational insight. The theory of knowledge has walled up the self in ontological seclusion, and if it is ever to escape to the sphere of supersensible reality, it can only be by a *tour de force*. We are to conclude from a desire which we find within us to the reality of its corresponding object—a desire in support of which we have not a single reason to offer. Our heart must remain satisfied with an ideal which we cannot know to be real.

The precarious nature of such a theory of religious cognition appears to be dimly adumbrated even in the expositions of Ritschlian writers themselves. They seem to be unable to rid their minds of the suspicion that, after all, value-judgments are not sufficient *per se* to apprehend the objects of religious faith, and that, while thrown out at these

[1] *Die Religion*, p. 355.

objects with all possible purity of aspiration, they prove somehow unable to break loose from the world of mere desire. This sentiment of insecurity seems to me to find clear enough expression in the function they assign to *revelation*, which they regard as having reached the world supremely in the person of Christ. Some tangible, objective ground of belief could not be dispensed with, if faith was not to hang helplessly between heaven and earth. And thus we find Herrmann announcing, toward the close of his argument, that historical revelation supplies us with the necessary grounds for the objective validity of our faith, that 'the reality of what is believed is for us also independent of the subjective experiences of believers, inasmuch as it rests securely upon the person of Jesus, and the relation of that person to the needs of the ethical spirit of man.'[1] Ritschl similarly maintains that the subjective judgments of feeling are warranted true and no illusions, only through the historical person of Christ and the testimony of the Church.[2] And to the same general effect Kaftan remarks that 'whether a religion really rests upon revelation is identical with the question whether or not it is true.'[3]

Here again the query cannot be evaded: How do we know that any given personality *is* a revelation? If there are true revelations, presumably there are 'revelations' that are false. The only consistent answer possible on Ritschlian

[1] *Die Religion*, p. 399.
[2] *R. u. V.*[3], iii. pp. 6, 184 ff., and *T. u. M.*, p. 16.
[3] *Das Wesen*, p. 197.

presuppositions—one of which is that the reference to spiritual being can be extracted only from a value-judgment—must be that we base our certainty that Jesus has truly revealed God exclusively on a judgment of worth. Jesus is to be appraised as the revealer of God, because what He brings to us is religiously valuable. But this is to argue in a very obvious circle. Revelation cannot communicate objectivity to the value-judgments of faith in general, if a value-judgment is the source of its own cogency. If our only outlook to the transcendent is through the judgment of worth, all that a 'revelation' can possibly effect is a modification of the meaning we ascribe to the words 'religiously valuable.' If value-judgments, in short, are true because of the worth of the objects they describe, no revelation is required to demonstrate their objective validity, for *ex hypothesi* that is already certain. If they are not, a revelation which draws all its persuasiveness from value-judgments is incapable of establishing their objectivity.

Thus we arrive at the same conclusion as before, that so long as feeling is the supreme court of appeal, religious belief is condemned to imprisonment in the dungeon of subjectivity. Feeling can offer us nothing but particular sensations of pleasure or pain; we must look to *thought* for the self, and for objects, and for the value which the one finds in the others. The categories of value must be shown to be categories of reason in the richest and most comprehensive sense of that word. Otherwise theology is left where Schleiermacher left it—

internally, elaborated by a master hand with marvellous felicity, but bereft of a genuinely scientific foundation. Or if we take the line which Herrmann has chosen and argue for the truth of faith on the ground that it renders morality possible, we are likely to disagree with him, not so much for what he affirms as for what he denies. For, not to dwell upon the fact that he can offer us no *known* object to which we may attach our ideally ethical judgments of faith, he ignores all the other links which bind the sentiment of moral obligation to the thought of God. Obligation is not a mere feeling; it comes to us laden with transcendent relations; in a very true sense it comes to us 'trailing clouds of glory, from God who is its home.' Nor do we project the source of it out into the vast inane, planting the being whom we call God vaguely in the ocean of characterless existence. Our thought reaches land again in the belief that the origin and fountain of moral inspiration is likewise the source and support of the causal and teleological order disclosed to us by knowledge. Further, we do not identify these two conceptions—the source of moral consciousness and the ground of nature—simply because we believe that they *must* be identified, if moral life is to be possible. It is a matter of history that man has been able to achieve a moral advance, and to find in nature progressively the vehicle and serviceable instrument of his ethical ideals. The conclusion, then, that the ground of nature and of spiritual life is one, is neither an

unjustifiable assumption nor a hazardous conjecture. It is, if you will, an expression of faith, but of that faith which is an essential element in knowledge.

It is impossible to acquiesce in the arrangement which Ritschlian writers attempt to bring about between faith and reason, by the amiable expedient of shutting up each in a water-tight compartment of the mind. Can any one who wishes to keep his intellectual conscience clear adopt, for instance, the desperate conclusions of Herrmann on the subject of miracle?[1] When two explanations of a single event evidently collide, mankind has agreed to believe that only one is true. Herrmann will reject neither. 'One of the most remarkable of Father Newman's Oxford sermons,' says Mr. Bagehot, 'explains how science teaches that the earth goes round the sun, and how Scripture teaches that the sun goes round the earth; and it ends by advising the discreet believer to accept *both*.' Similarly, Herrmann cannot see how any Christian can resign the belief that Jesus rose from the dead, but *qua* scientist he finds the belief absolutely untenable. So that, in this particular instance, faith, expressed in a value-judgment, has actually power to create an objective 'truth' out of nothing —nay, out of less than nothing, for Herrmann grants unreservedly the finality of scientific objections to the Resurrection. But mental book-keeping by double entry is bound to collapse with a clearer vision of the unity of truth. On this

[1] *Die Religion*, pp. 382 ff.

point von Hartmann's words are singularly apposite : 'In this controversy between heart and understanding only two views are possible. Either the understanding is right, and then the protest of the heart is the result of dispositions of feeling which survive from earlier periods of culture ; in this case, too, their complete removal and destruction by means of the dissolvent lye of the understanding is only a question of time. Or the heart is right ; then it *is* right only because with the unconscious reason of instinct it has grasped a higher form of truth than the understanding with its discursive reflection ; then, too, the heart will *show* itself to be in the right, and finally see its ideals recognised even by the understanding as truth.'

The first remark which suggests itself when we regard the Ritschlian movement as a whole is that it bears very evident tokens of having come into existence amid circumstances of intellectual storm and stress. The extraordinary progress of natural science by which this century has been distinguished ; the consequent tendency of many minds to consider the conceptions of science as not only self-explanatory, but explanatory of everything else ; the general disposition to recognise the reality of that alone which could in some way or other be made accessible to the immediate testimony of the senses—these things could not fail to affect current theological methods. To this must be added the fact that an irresistible reaction had set in against Hegelian intellectualism, that a tendency and a

resolution had arisen to disbelieve in the virtue of dialectical incantations to charm away the antinomies of fact, and that it had begun to be felt that in Hegel's hands religion had become too much a matter of speculative thought, too little one of feeling and emotion. Faith had been made an affair of the school rather than of the universal heart. Both these influences have left their mark deep upon the Ritschlian system. One might almost say that it was thought out by a sincere believer in the truth of religion, with his back to the wall and his face to the advancing forces of materialistic science. And its elaboration was accompanied by an ever-present sense, and, as it seems to me, a disabling and a sceptical sense, of the incompetency of reason to apprehend the Divine reality which lies behind the veil of phenomena.

We have seen that Ritschlianism lays great weight upon a certain conception of *faith* as an attitude of mind entirely independent of reason, and capable of producing certainty in the believing consciousness, though upon other grounds than those of knowledge. How come these thinkers to assign to faith such plenipotentiary powers, and to constitute it in everything but in name a mode of apprehension? Whence comes this tendency to trust the heart against the head, to assert that faith is unaffected by negative arguments which are intellectually irrefutable?

This tendency appears to be simply an exaggeration of an indubitable truth. It *is* the fact that

no amount of evidence can avail to induce that self-surrender to an infinite object in which religion may be said to consist. The greatest perspicacity of moral perception is powerless to restrain a man who is bent on doing wrong. In both cases you have to allow for an act of freedom. It is a question of the heart, and so Paul could say, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' and could speak of the 'faith that worketh by love.' This, then, is a characteristic peculiar to faith, but it is not by itself alone equivalent to faith. The older theologians used to divide faith into *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia*, and it is in the disposition of the heart and will noted above that *fiducia* consists. But the Ritschlian position comes finally to this, that *fiducia* is made to do the work of *notitia* as well as its own; while in reality it denotes the trustful apprehension of an object recognised in *notitia* as real. Into faith then enters, not only faith as surrender of the heart, but also the *faith of cognition*, that divining insight of knowledge which seizes, as it were prophetically, upon supersensible objects and relations. *Notitia* may exist without *fiducia*, for a man may defy God; but *fiducia* without *notitia* is blind.

The natural consequence of adherence to the Ritschlian point of view is a violent antipathy to dogma. Yet we may be sure that on this negative swing of the pendulum the positive will follow. The rights of reason to fulfil her function even within the domain of sacred truth cannot be permanently suppressed. The conviction is bound

to assert itself that religion makes appeal to the whole nature of man, not to feeling or to will alone, or to anything but the undivided personality. Movements of negation, such as Ritschlianism, do not obliterate the progress of the past; the tide moves on, though single waves recede. In this case the scholasticism of post-Reformation systems has forced a natural reaction. The artificial infinity of detail to be found in orthodox text-books, and the pretended minuteness of spiritual diagnosis, finally offended practical minds and made simplicity attractive.

Though professedly independent of philosophy, Ritschlianism rashly joined its early fortunes with a certain theory of knowledge. If Kantianism is mistaken, Herrmann's philosophical introduction to theology falls like a house of cards. Yet we should gravely err if we decided that nothing can be learned from a man of such pure and elevated faith, and of so singularly impressive an intensity of religious conviction. This whole movement, its antecedents and its programme, have many things to teach the Christian Church. And chiefly this, I think, that religion is not theology. It is not apart from theology, or, indeed, quite devoid of theology in any mind; but the two are not the same. One may profess a system of enviable impeccability, abounding in faultless deductions, and impregnable in controversy, yet never have caught a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. If particular theological dogmas obscure *that* from us,

if we cannot read the gospels with open, docile hearts while they remain in our minds, we ought to get rid of them without delay and without remorse. But we ought also to take care that neither sloth, nor impatience, nor despair dissuades us from replacing them with doctrines that are better.

VIII The Development of the Ritschlian School[1]

RITSCHL died in 1889, and the interval, long enough to afford a perspective, is not quite so long as to relegate his system to the ineffectual past. Important thinkers are still at work to whom his teaching came as a revelation. And if men like Herrmann (who died early in 1922), Kaftan, and Haering agree in finding the inspiration of their best thinking in principles received from Ritschl, it is more than likely that he was a great man and did a great work. On the other hand, it is evident that Ritschlians no longer form a characteristic group. The movement has on the whole tended to merge in the general stream of present-day theology. It may be worth while to ascertain why disciples have abandoned some positions held by the leader, and have moved further on to right or left. Three questions, accordingly, confront us :—Why was Ritschl hailed in theology as a liberator of the mind? What were the later fortunes of his teaching? What has he left as an abiding gain?

The polemics of the 'eighties prove that Ritschlianism, on its first appearance, gave alike to friend and foe the impression of being a new thing. It certainly was a big thing. We can now see it to have been the biggest theological fact in the

[1] *London Quarterly Review*, January 1914.

second half of the nineteenth century, and up to date it has had no successor.[1] Thirty years ago it precipitated ideas which till then had been present in solution, and only wanted a nucleus to crystallise. Where lay the secret of this timeliness ?

To answer, let us take a brief quotation from that erudite and high-minded scholar, the late Professor Flint, of Edinburgh. In a prefatory note to Dr. Ferries' translation of an important work by Kaftan,[2] he enumerates some reasons why Ritschlianism 'is a force in the theological world which must be reckoned with'; and it is worth noting that these reasons were stated by a determined antagonist of Ritschlianism as far back as 1893. 'This theology,' he writes, 'has got some very noteworthy features. It strives to represent Christian faith as its own sufficient foundation. It seeks to secure for religion a domain within the sphere of feeling and practical judgment, into which theoretical reason cannot intrude. It would keep theology independent of philosophy, free from all contamination of metaphysics. It would rest it entirely on the revelation of God in Christ. It claims to be thoroughly evangelical and Lutheran. It aims steadily at the promotion of piety, the satisfaction of spiritual wants, and the furtherance of the practical work of the Church. It is intensely sincere and alive.' Not a bad certificate from an

[1] Ernst Troeltsch, whose death in the spring of this year was the severest loss theology has recently had to bear, was perhaps too many-sided to initiate a school of movement. No movement without a battle-cry, a fruitful over-emphasis.

[2] *The Truth of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols.

enemy! Dr. Flint proceeds to question its ability to make good these claims, but most people will agree that the claims in many respects are worth vindicating, if vindication can be given. It was their attractiveness that, from the very outset, made the appeal of Ritschl's thought so wide.

Theologians, like statesmen, have a policy; and Ritschl had his policy like the rest. He meant to give unity and freedom to the Christian mind by drawing it back to the Gospel of the New Testament. Unity and freedom are great things, specially worth while in religion, and students of contemporary divinity do not have to be told that at the time they were badly needed. It will scarcely be argued that unity and freedom, in the usual sense, are characteristic of the arguments of the Augsburg Confession, the Westminster Confession, or the Thirty-nine Articles. These documents are less expressions of faith than systems of Dogmatic, and we read them with a growing sense that the multiplicity of ideas, the mere number of things proposed for belief, is painful and bewildering. But faith cannot be satisfied with an aggregate of doctrines; it seeks and it contains a single unifying principle. Hence we can understand the relief with which in many quarters men greeted the new simplification of theology—not, however, in the low sense of simplicity, as evisceration and impoverishment, but as deliberate concentration on what really matters. First things first; then, but not till then, the luxury of theoretic interpretation. What Ritschl said, in effect if not actually

in words, may be put thus : Let us fix it that any man is a Christian who can say, *ex animo*, I believe in God through Jesus Christ ; and with this as criterion and touchstone let us go over the traditional system and test the various beliefs by applying it to each in turn. In respect to the thought of God, of sin, of redemption, of Christian perfection, we ought to ask and keep on asking, What truth on each point is certified by faith in Jesus ? If there be dead matter in the hereditary system, which people only say they believe because they hear it frequently from others, let it be dropped for good and all, and nobody will be a penny the worse. We shall only be the freer to unite in essentials.

Obviously, certain conditions being given, this may turn out to be a principle of vigorous doctrinal reformation. Let us ask how it worked out. Theology as a connected system may be defined, like a circle, by reference to three given points—God, the soul, and the Church or redeemed society. It was by these that Ritschl took his bearings.

(*a*) To begin with the soul : it was an axiom with Ritschl that theology must be written from the standpoint of the specifically Christian mind. He puts this by saying that every proposition in a true Dogmatic is the spontaneous expression of saving faith, the system being only the statement of Christian conviction as a living whole. Religious knowledge is the knowledge of a religious man ; nobody can understand it who is not personally a believer, who has not seen Jesus. Many people

(especially in Scotland) are quite convinced that 'the man in the street,' no matter what his personal attitude to faith, is a thoroughly competent judge of doctrine. Nothing could be more false or indeed more sentimental, and Ritschl was entitled to all the emphasis of his protest that doctrine is only interpretable in the light of experience, and that no one can grasp or appreciate or bear witness to its truth except believing men. It is simply not the case that the Fatherhood of God, or forgiveness through Christ, or everlasting life is equally real and sure to all minds. The man who does not long for righteousness cannot see what the Gospel is for. A veil is upon his face. To know for certain who Christ is we must accept His claim upon our lives; if that leaves us cold, then we may have no more comprehension of the presented truth than a blind man in a picture-gallery.

All this was put more theoretically by saying that religious knowledge consists in, or is expressed by, judgments of value or appreciation. A pure historian may say, 'Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate'; no one except a Christian can add: 'His blood cleanses from all sin.' This last accordingly is a value-judgment, a personal conviction, a believing estimate of Jesus' death in its redemptive meaning for the sinful. And Ritschl held that theology should be made up of such personal convictions and nothing else. It should be natural to begin each proposition with the words of Paul: 'I am persuaded that . . .'

Quite naturally there was an outcry. At first

it did seem as though Ritschl were maintaining that Christians believe, and ought to believe, what they deeply wish. In his earliest statements, he partially failed to make clear the point that value-judgments include or presuppose an assertion of the reality of the valued object, and the matter is one in regard to which later writers were able to make good his deficiencies. Needless to say, however, his first *intention* was unobjectionable. His aim, so far from being to suggest the illusory character of faith's object—a sheer absurdity, of course, in a Christian writer—was to exhibit the persuasion of truth in religion as being reached by an avenue different from those travelled by in scientific or historical research. Few would now regard him as mistaken.

When we consider this definition of theology as the self-explication of Christian faith, we perceive what must at once happen if it is accepted and put into operation. Speculative rationalism must go. Of course we are all speculative rationalists in one sense, in so far as we endeavour to think out and think through the implications of belief. But in the sense of which Hegelianism is the great modern example—a speculative rationalism which comes to meet the Gospel with ready-made conceptions of ultimate reality, which have been framed for the most part in indifference to the experiences that make a man Christian—in this sense Ritschl drove it from the field. Any one who has been inside his theology knows that his thought of the living God, of revelation in Jesus Christ, of miracle,

of sin, of the Church, are of a sort which lift up the mind beyond the range of a metaphysic operating with general ideas. It becomes plain that metaphysic, in spite of its intellectual value, never really touches the problems which most concern religious people. What metaphysic has ever dealt seriously with guilt, with forgiveness, with prayer, above all with the self-consciousness of Jesus? It may well be that this feat—the expulsion of speculative rationalism from theology—will finally count as the main achievement of Ritschlianism.

(*b*) In the doctrine of God, Ritschl gave the orientation of his system by placing revealing fact at the centre. It is faith that makes religious affirmations, but faith is in no way self-sufficient. It can neither create nor maintain its own life. In strictness it is a *response*; we believe in the Christian God because we have encountered Christ in history. Who the historic Jesus was, is to be learned from apostles as well as from Himself; and from both, the saving Person and the impression left upon the saved, we gain an intuitive apprehension of a fact that redeems us, and our minds open through it to faith in the Father. Ritschl asked his generation to give Jesus a hearing as He speaks out of the New Testament, and multitudes who, perplexed in the extreme, had gone to philosophic reason, and found reason speaking in discordant tongues, listened and took courage. Christ, for Ritschl, constitutes a definitive revelation of the grace of God—a revelation distinct, though, of course, not isolated from the

rest of the world or history, and characterised by uniqueness, universality, and transcendence. Whatever is entitled to be called Christian, in thought or life, is anchored to Jesus ; no objection to this, in the name of theoretic reason, is of any importance. It is not that Jesus opens a doorway and passes the believer into a rich world of ideas where he may wander at his own sweet will, independent of the Guide who brought him thither ; Jesus Christ, in Ritschl's own explicit phrase, is the principle of knowledge at each point in religious thought. In short, there is a relation of man to God which is distinctive of Christianity—the relation which may be summarily described as filial : this we see perfectly realised in Jesus that it may be realised also in us, through Him. Thus Dogmatic, like the individual, is a Christian thing only in so far as it consistently takes the Christian attitude to Jesus. Ritschl's letters as early as 1853 prove that in choosing this point of view, and resolving to make it the organising centre of his systematic work, he believed himself to have reached a principle of unity which other men had sought in vain.

(*c*) The third decisive point is society. If Christian truth is apprehensible only by faith, and mediated by specific revelation embodied in a Person, it is also vitally related to the Church as a society called into existence by Divine intention. No modern writer has more unweariedly proclaimed the social quality of Christian religion ; not in the sense that it directly inspires social effort—for this the time was not yet—but in the

cardinal sense that it was a redeemed community that Jesus came to found. Many people are at a loss what to do with the idea of the Church. The Church is not for their minds something specific, unlike everything else in the world, because created for unique ends ; it has no divine functions, transcending those of poor-law or school or university ; it has no divine Spirit energising within it, no divine and glorious destiny. It is unnecessary to contend that on all these points Ritschl professed altogether satisfactory opinions, but at least he did insist upon the Church being given something like the dominant and subduing place it receives in the New Testament.

Schleiermacher had preceded Ritschl, it is true, in emphasising the social character of Christianity. But Ritschl did more ; he placed the Church in the very centre of the spiritual experience. For him it is the vehicle by which Christian worship goes down from one generation to another, the historic medium through which primitive faith still touches men and is reproduced in our day. There is a sense in which it actually conveys forgiveness. Occasionally, no doubt, Ritschl put this in ways which invite misconception. He argued that the Church, not the individual, is the first and proper object of justification ; or, to put it otherwise, justification is an event in history in which God may be conceived as saying : ' I forgive, by admitting to fellowship with Me, all who shall hereafter be living members of the Church of My Son.' So that we personally are forgiven because we

belong to a forgiven society ; thus, and only thus. It is virtually agreed that for this he had no sound exegetical basis, and his belief that he had merely revived the teaching of the great Reformers was equally mistaken. And yet the Church does mediate forgiveness, not as a hierarchical institution, but as a community of redeemed lives. It is through the Church that all receive the Christian heritage.

Three reasons may be given why the theology just outlined came to have a captivating influence at the close of last century. For one thing, it planted faith on the rock of historic fact. Life derives from history all that makes it rich. 'If you want a picture of spiritual beggary,' says a vivid writer, 'contemplate the mind of man stripped of all its historical accumulations and sitting naked amid the eternal truths of reason.' Ritschl told a realistic age that religion, like art, literature, science, and political life, springs out of the past. He led his generation back to the New Testament, and the impression thus made was further heightened by some masterly surveys of doctrinal evolution. Next, there was his fidelity to the Reformation. He was not one of those bland persons who tell you, with a thankful shudder, that the Roman controversy is over now ; he said with perfect clearness that Romanism is still *the* question, and will never cease to be so, simply because it offers an alternative form of Christianity. Finally, the manly strength of his intelligence must never be overlooked. In his mind the Christian religion stood for *power* ;

power to become masters of life in freedom won by Christ. It is not that he was indifferent to the guilt of sin ; but his chief interest lay in building up the Divine kingdom, and, as a preliminary, in the creation of the renewed character that makes building possible. And though hostile critics, who watched him as a detective might watch a criminal, protested that if you wanted to know how little religion there was in the man you had only to read his History of Pietism, it is undeniable that in his polemic against some unfortunate aspects of pietistic practice he had the not unimportant backing of the Epistle to the Romans. Neither in theology nor in preaching had Ritschl any use for mere pictures of the soul in its ups and downs ; he cared only for God in Christ, and His unchanging grace.

The careful observer of theology will perceive that Ritschlian ideas are now in circulation more widely than is readily owned. This is particularly true of recent attempts to elucidate the distinction between religion and theology, or to state doctrine modernly yet in harmony with the old faith ; it applies to many presentations of the essence of Christianity, of the history of dogma, and perhaps most of all to a tolerably general consent that the knowledge or insight with which faith is charged is of a morally conditioned kind. It would be foolish to insist that indebtedness to Ritschl is universal. But in view of these concurrent phenomena it is at all events reasonable to urge that Ritschl is the typical religious thinker of our time,

in whom its characteristic sympathies and antipathies are focused. Harnack put this felicitously when, in 1897, he said that Ritschl bids fair to be the latest 'Church Father.' In our own country his system, or more correctly his leading principles, have encountered that ordeal of rapidly modified criticism which is so peculiarly English, when Englishmen are confronted with a new fact. In a situation so difficult they first say, 'We never heard anything like this before'—which is meant to be final. After a second look, 'It is contrary to the Bible.' Then at last, 'We knew it all the time.'

If in the Ritschlian school there existed, as in that of Hegel, a close body of disciples to whom the master's least word was sacred, this phase was soon over. Followers who took to print made their independence clear by the freedom and persistency with which they criticised the leader. In the main branch of the movement, there has always been a sustained attempt to do fuller justice than his to the fundamental certainties of the New Testament and the Christian mind. The school has been held together, indeed, not by conclusions, but by common pursuance of a method. We may briefly indicate the points in Ritschl's work which evoked the keenest scrutiny.

The first is New Testament interpretation. It must not be forgotten that Ritschl's attitude to modern critical tendencies, which in large measure he had inspired, was for the most part fairly cool. Even at the time his position ranked as

conservative. It has also been generally felt that his exegetical writing suffers from a tendency to impose his own dogmatic beliefs upon the words of Scripture. The Kingdom of God, for instance, he construed as a purely ethical conception, and to the last he was blind to the apocalyptic strain derived from contemporary Judaism which runs through Gospels and Epistles, and the detailed examination of which in recent years has so much quickened New Testament study. But neglect of historic criticism brings a penalty. Reliance upon any fixed interpretation of historical incidents and sequences can only hurt the soul, for, as Herrmann puts it, there is no technical guarantee for the truth of religious faith. Criticism, with its hint of the merely problematic nature of the results of scientific inquiry, is one of God's means to cast us on Himself alone, for life and blessedness.

Furthermore, Ritschl had given 'the world' an unduly central place in his interpretation of religious experience. The result was an apparent secularisation of piety, which made it too much an affair of the present life and order. He had defined religion as mitigating the tension between the free conscious spirit and a hostile environment. Faith on these terms is a weapon we grasp at in the struggle for existence. Soon his adherents felt this to be unworthy. True religion means that we find and clasp the living God, and love Him for His own sake. As it is put in the finest mistranslation in the world, *Wenn ich nur Dich habe, so frage ich nichts nach Himmel und Erde.* Our relation to the seen, to

things of sense and time, is not the supreme factor in religion ; that rests on and circles round our relation to God, and the attempt to reverse this order, if consistently translated into practice, can only end in hypocrisy. Wherever the language of the New Testament soars and burns, we find what has been truly called 'the mystic tone of Divine possession, for which the world hardly exists.'

It was another aspect of this one-sidedness which provoked critics to say that Ritschl was indifferent to immortality. Of course he was not really ; like others he had loved and lost ; but in theology he rather took immortality for granted than dwelt upon it in argument. His aversion to sentimentalism may perhaps account for this. It need not of course be said that Christianity of the apostolic type cannot recognise itself in any view which does not imply a Divine eternal life, transcendent even more than immanent.

Again, some of the friendliest observers felt from the start, that in spite of his fancied superiority to metaphysic it was precisely his philosophical presuppositions which forbade Ritschl to catch on his mind a thoroughly Christian impression of several great things. He had discarded Hegel ; but Kant remained, and at times Kant and the New Testament disagree. It is not, for instance, unfair to say that Ritschl on the whole underestimates the Christian idea of sin. He aimed at a working faith, and he felt as if the needed faith would work none the better for a poignant and habitual consciousness of ill-desert. We shall all concede the partial

truth of this: it is certain that men have often grown weaker by morbid brooding on past transgression, thus enlisting against themselves laws of mental association by which thoughts of evil acquire an unfortunate prominence in the fancy. But the crucial fact still remains that the feeling of guilt grows with growing holiness, and that it was a great saint who spoke of himself as the chief of sinners. A clearer recognition of this would have spared us Ritschl's remark that others might conceivably have fulfilled Christ's mission as perfectly as He. In fairness one must add that the notion seems to have possessed for him a purely dialectical value.

Other points may be specified briefly at which the Kantian principle of ethical independence and self-sufficiency has exerted a baneful influence on Ritschl's estimate of the Gospel. Thus it was Kant who led him to say that the divinity of Christ is interpretable as simple perfection of moral character; yet the perfection of Christ's moral character is only one element of the truth. Men have always felt that in Jesus we are face to face with a transcendent reality in which God gives His very Self, to suffer for and save His children, and that apart from this there is no real infinitude in our thought of the Divine love. It was Kant, not the New Testament, that prompted the idea that we are related to the exalted Lord solely through our knowledge of the historic Jesus; which is partly true, indeed, and not only true but important, and yet ignores the fact that Christian

life, as a real experience, implies the presence and spiritual action of Christ in a mode transcending time. Similarly, it is no doubt true, as he urges, that the believer's possession of the Spirit registers itself in a new kind of religious knowledge and a new quality of moral life; yet again the Spirit is no mere characteristic of the Christian mind, but a self-impartation of the living God. It may have been the same hampering influence which rendered him virtually colour-blind to the sound elements in mysticism. It is vain to denounce all mysticism as anti-Christian, when the faith-mysticism of St. Paul and St. John looks at us from every page they wrote. Some term we must use to indicate the private inwardness and originality of every genuine spiritual experience in which the soul is consciously one with God, and for this mysticism is perhaps the best term available. This was one of the first points in his argument to be revised by members of his party.

These criticisms were acquiesced in, and even urged, by devoted followers of Ritschl. Beneath them all lay the feeling that in these particular details he had been untrue to his own principles, and that his general exposition would gain by their amendment. But times change. A day came, some twenty years ago, when the Left or Radical wing of Ritschlianism broke away independently, claiming for themselves in a special sense the title 'modern,' and agitating some new and extremely vital problems. What are the points on which they spoke out? We may follow Titius in summarising them as, in the main, these four.

First, they complain of Ritschl's indifference to questions of natural science. Or, admitting the prudence of reserve at a time when science was still intoxicated by ideas of materialistic evolution, they contend that he gives little or no help in solving the special problems of our own day. To pretend to shut off religion from science by water-tight doors is futile; after all, religion and science are abstractions, and while they may be separated in books, what have we to say to the religious man who wants to be scientific, or the man of science who wants to be religious? I believe this form of dissatisfaction points to a real weakness in Ritschl's view of knowledge, of which the long and occasionally tedious debate on value-judgments was symptomatic. It is absolutely necessary to bring out the fact that religious knowledge is veritable apprehension of reality, a more adequate and profound apprehension indeed than anything which can be arrived at by methods of physics, biology, or historical research. If science or history could justly claim to give a complete account of reality, the prospect of reconciliation would be hopeless; in point of fact it is not so, for these studies are actually interested only in special parts or aspects of the whole. On the other hand, it looks as if the Radicals were in danger of repeating the mistake, against which Ritschl waged a ceaseless and exterminating war, of measuring all things by a non-spiritual criterion. History, as defined by naturalism, is made the measure of the possible, and the world is so conceived that the Christian

religion, as it has shaped the past, becomes unreal.

Secondly, Harnack's prophecy has come true that before long the apologetic questions lightly brushed aside by Ritschl would reappear, and they have done so in a keen discussion of miracle. On that topic the attitude of Ritschl had always been moderate but positive, more particularly as regards the Resurrection, nor had he shrunk from defending the supernatural narratives of the Gospels in face of Zeller's vehement attack. To the true-blue Radical this is of course anathema. The cosmos is a system of unyielding law, apart from which science is unthinkable, and to speak of events which law does not cover and exhaust is to make scientific inquiry unreal. Here, too, something may be allowed to a legitimate desire to correct the older notion of miracle as a breach of natural law. Whatever law means, it is at least not anything at variance with incessant new departures; the world-process is open to the future, and the Divine preferential action may use rather than violate its regularities. The radical anti-supernatural propaganda, therefore, is no advance upon Ritschl, but emphatically a lapse to a lower plane. The Christian mind will never be convinced that faith in the living God can be adequately expressed in terms of law, evolution, and uniformity. Such categories give no proper account of prayer as a real fellowship of God and man, much less of the personal experience of Jesus.

Again, offence has been taken at the Ritschlian

conception of history as a source or medium of absolute religious truth. Does he not see, men ask with wonder, that to religion all history is a burden and embarrassment? Surely the demand for intellectual assent to particular occurrences in the past is an invasion of personality, a coarse intrusion upon the pure piety of the devout heart. We have God and He has us, irrespectively of all else; and the historic Jesus Himself does no more than guide us to a point at which we apprehend God on our own behalf. It is long since Jesus lived; everything in history at best is probable; gradually the past is absorbed or transcended, after which we move away from it: for these reasons the ground of faith must be sought elsewhere—say, in rational intuition. Is this a real advance?

I cannot think it will impress any one who has stood face to face with Jesus, and been conscious that in Him very God is touching and saving us. There is a sight of Jesus which quenches all doubt of His reality. There is a sense of being in the presence of the supreme fact, when He confronts us in the sovereign energies of a life over which time has no power. The man who has beheld Jesus as Saviour and Lord will listen courteously to arguments meant to prove that no past fact can be quite certain, or that absolute values are something which history has no power to transmit, but they will not affect him. They might be good arguments enough if Jesus were not there, but in His presence they are of no account.

Finally, it has been urged that Ritschl ignored

the new facts of the Science of Religions. On the surface, indeed, the charge is true. The younger scholars who led the way in the investigation of primitive Christianity in its relation to a Hellenistic background, did so more in spite of Ritschl than under his guidance. His own tendency was to isolate the faith. Christianity is absolute; it is all-present in Jesus; other faiths are only relative; and we can say no more. But so cavalier a method will never do. It must be abandoned even for the sake of Christianity itself. How could we urge the missionary enterprise, at the cost of money, toil, and death, but for the settled belief that the Gospel offers to all men what is better than their best; and how can this be known, much less proved, except as the other faiths are examined with understanding, and, in a real sense, with sympathy? Readers of the fourth volume of Reports to the World Missionary Conference (1910) will recall the intensity with which Principal D. S. Cairns urges this consideration. 'Have we fully realised,' he asks, 'the immeasurable value of the idea of the Holy Spirit in the light which Comparative Religion, and in particular in the light which India, casts on the inner nature of the religious aspiration of man?'

None the less, be our reservations what they may, it can never be forgotten that Ritschl was a pioneer and that pioneers are not to be measured by standards too pedestrian. The path-breaker, always, is a specialist and a prophet, bent with apostolic zeal on leading the world to accept a

principle or group of principles, casting round a few great ideas an intense light. Ritschl's main task, and one which he fulfilled, was to fling into modern theology an element of fermentation certain to produce new formations, new controversies, new problems and answers—not to give a meticulously complete system, which could be got by heart and handed on. He revived theology as no man has done since Schleiermacher, but he would have been the first to frown upon a tendency to canonise his own results. Whatever deductions may have to be made from his thought as a whole, the fundamental religious principles upon which he built are sound. Christianity rests on the historic Christ, and, in the redeemed experience, sonship by grace is the central and organising fact. These things are beyond challenge. What will rightly be challenged is the special and detailed application he has made of ideas so vital. In systematic thought there is no final form. Theologies from the first have perished; they wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture Time folds them up, and lays them by. Nothing save the Gospel is abiding, and its years shall not fail.

IX *Modernism in the Church of Rome*[1]

THE movement of thought usually designated Modernism is by all odds the most critical and important fact in the history of the Roman Church since the Reformation. It is so because it involves not merely this or that point of doctrine, however vital, such as justification by faith ; not merely some principle of ecclesiastical government, however central ; but the entire Roman view of Christianity as a religion. No one can deny that Romanism would have to be remodelled from end to end if Modernists had their way. On this account we shall do well now to confine our thoughts to Modernism within the Papacy, neglecting that vaguer use of the word in which it has often been employed to indicate the presence, in any theology, of a liberal and progressive spirit. Our interest is naturally awakened by the spread of less traditional opinions, say, in the Church of England ; but for the moment we must put this tempting subject on one side.

It will be of service if at the outset we try to fix clearly two or three points regarding Modernism as a whole. First, it must be defined. Modernism is the view or theory which recognises the right of

[1] *London Quarterly Review*, April 1915.

modern thought in the field of theology, and recognises it on principle. According to Father Tyrrell, it is best conceived in practice as the exact opposite of Mediaevalism; and Mediaevalism, in its turn, is the view that a vital and inseparable union subsists between the Christian faith and the scholastic thought of the Middle Ages. It assumes, to put it roughly but in no sense unfairly, that the theological system of Thomas Aquinas, dating from the thirteenth century, is but the technical expansion of the apostolic gospel, and represents an adequate or final theological expression of religious truth. Mediaevalism, that is, as the official theory of Rome, stands for a theology that can never change, but abides more changeless even than the eternal hills. To this Modernism makes the rejoinder that theology, which is a human construction, must vary with the times, and as a result of the growth of knowledge. It stands for life and movement in contrast with stagnation.

After definition comes the field of operations. Where did Modernism break out, and what special problems were first raised? The answer to this question is clear enough. The modernist point of departure is not found, as might have been supposed, in the realm of theology proper, but in that of history and Biblical Criticism. For several years, ten or fifteen at least, Roman Catholic scholars have been writing good history, of a kind that gains the cordial admiration of their Protestant brethren. Duchesne, for instance, had probably no living rival. But it could not be that able

and sincere men should engage in free research without discovering that some at all events of the results prescribed for them by tradition must be given up. It was by this breach in the sea-dyke that the flood of modern thought poured in, to submerge old landmarks. But while the mischief started here, the fundamental problems did not and could not lie in the sphere of history. These belong really to the field of doctrine ; in particular they centre in the question of the infallibility of the Church, and in recent times of the Pope, as the basis of Roman unity.

It is interesting to note the proof which Modernism offers that the sense of truth, or reality, is like an atmosphere, entering even at tightly closed windows. It means that Rome, too, has felt the influence of Protestant ideas. One German Catholic has traced the rise of Modernism in his own country to the effects of Ritschlianism, with what amount of truth it is not easy to determine. At all events, no one can doubt that in Europe and America there is gradually being formed a common fund of ascertained knowledge in Church history, and that unless Rome is resolved to break off diplomatic relations with the world of thought—a policy she has never yet pursued beyond the point of self-recovery—it must prove more and more difficult for her to avoid the contagion of frank inquiry. One thing more Modernism has proved. It has proved how inexorable is the problem of relating Christian faith to the investigations of history. In circles with which we here are more

familiar people may now and then be heard to speak of this problem as a quite minor one, of no real urgency, and kept artificially alive by needless and provocative discussion. You may gather from their language how they envy the Pope his short and easy way with heretics. But we may be sure no unreal issue would ever have set Romanism on fire. Nor in that case would Modernism have burst out simultaneously, without collusion, in different countries. It began in France shortly after 1890, when Loisy's writings on the Old and New Testaments were condemned. It began in Germany about 1895, with the public letters of Kraus. It began not much later in Italy, though here at first the movement was slow. And as for England, by 1897 the mind of Tyrrell had begun to work upon questions which occupied him continuously till his death in 1910. We ought not to miss the spontaneity with which the varied movement came up as the result of forces which could no longer be thrust back. These forces are not those of mere negation or scepticism; they are owing rather to the impact of truth hitherto ignored or denied by official Romanism; they are due to the strength of facts; and all facts, when they are once seen, are, in Rainy's phrase, 'God's facts.' Even Protestantism has found it hard enough to admit the significance of new discoveries and fresh points of view, and the task is not likely to be simpler for the more rigid and less sensitive thought of Rome.

Older historians like Döllinger and Hefele must be given the credit of waking a more liberal spirit

in the scholarly circles of this Church some sixty years ago. Everything, as we have seen, depends on whether Roman doctrine is bound up indissociably and for ever with the thought-forms of the Middle Ages ; and as early as 1863, addressing a Congress of Roman scholars, Döllinger admitted frankly that mediaeval thinking is one-sided. Scholasticism, as he put it, has only one eye ; for history, for the process, that is, and becoming of development, it has no eye at all. He also pleaded, though in guarded fashion, for a more hospitable attitude to modern philosophy.

Every one knows that keen debate has prevailed on the point whether Newman is to be reckoned one of the spiritual fathers of Modernism. The question is one that does not allow of being answered by a simple Yes or No. On the one hand, it is undeniable that the effect of his work was to alter in some important respects the line of defence for Roman Apologetic. The old theory of an unvarying tradition of doctrine reaching back to the Apostles went by the board when Newman brought forward his theory of organic development. He felt, before secession, that certain distinctive Roman doctrines were unknown to the early Church, and after submission it became necessary to find a better vindication of Rome's present doctrine than was offered by rigid traditionalism. Hence in his celebrated *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, he put forth a view amounting in substance to this, that Christ ' had but committed to His Church certain seeds and germs of truth,

destined afterwards to expand to definite forms; consequently, that our Lord did not intend that the teaching of His Church should always be the same; but ordained that it should go on continually improving under the guidance of His Holy Spirit.'[1] It has been pointed out that when we think of Tractarianism, as led and shaped by Newman, we at once think of the Romeward trend revealed by it in the Church of England; we forget the Protestant leaven introduced by it in the Church of Rome. Such a result was of course certain: men cannot in an hour cast off the influences of youth and nurture. Newman's general attitude to New Testament religion differs in subtle but quite discernible ways from that of the majority of Romanists; it is more intimate, more unqualified, more spiritual. Again, his emphasis on personal experience, on the witness of conscience as the main proof of the Gospel is in no sense characteristically Roman; at one point he has gone so far as to claim for the individual conscience, in special circumstances, the right to disregard a Papal command. Hence I think there is a real sense in which Newman's thought, and especially his conception of doctrinal evolution, may be said to have furnished the seed-plot of English Modernism. He roused and stimulated the men into whose hands the leadership of the movement fell. It was Tyrrell's view that Pope Pius X., in his Encyclical of 1907, had actually condemned Newman and his ideas, whether intentionally or not. Be this as it

[1] Salmon, *Infallibility of the Church*, p. 31.

may, and however clear it does seem to be that Newman shook some Roman minds out of their dogmatic slumber,[1] it is vain to make him the *conscious* leader of a new school. Nothing can be more certain than that he would have disavowed, *ex animo*, the consequences which not a few Modernists, with apparent logic, have drawn from his principles or his works. As one writer remarks, he can only be called the spiritual father of Modernism if it is quite understood that children are often very unlike their parents, and that parents cannot be held responsible for everything their children do.

Recent biographies have shown that for any Roman mind in the faintest degree sympathetic with modern thought, the Vatican Council of 1870 was a heavy blow. Two things then done were irreconcilably hostile to the free use of ideas. The principles newly affirmed by the Council pointed to Scholasticism as the classic form of Roman theology for all time. In itself this was painful, but a deeper melancholy was induced by the dogma of Papal Infallibility. It seemed once for all to make an end of Roman scholarship. What hopes and fears clustered round this subject may be seen from the published letters of Manning on one side and on the other of Newman. None the less it is curious how little either hope or fear has been justified. A few, like W. G. Ward, may have wished an infallible Papal pronouncement on some topic of faith or morals to arrive with each morning's

[1] That wonderful book, the *Grammar of Assent*, must never be orgotten.

newspaper. Others were as obviously in dread lest Rome should cover herself with discredit by a wild manufacture of new dogmas. Nothing of the kind took place. The most interesting thing about Papal Infallibility is that it has never explicitly been used. Since 1870 no new dogma has been promulgated. The power of pronouncing infallibly on disputable matters has been held in reserve but never actually put in force.

Not only so, but when liberal Romanists inspected the dogma of Infallibility more closely, it somehow looked less terrible than had been feared. Thus, it is laid down that the Pope cannot err when he speaks *ex cathedra* on subjects of faith and morals ; but then, when *does* he speak *ex cathedra* ? Not by any means necessarily, we are told, in the decisions of the Roman congregations, not even in the most solemn Allocutions or Decrees, issued as they may be with every circumstance of impressiveness. Attempts have been made to define an infallible utterance—as that it must include a positive doctrine and anathematise the opposite error ; but without success. Hence it soon occurred to those most deeply interested that the obscurity surrounding the use of infallible insight was in fact a positive advantage. It enables the Church to keep clear of embarrassing commitments ; since, if a Decree should contain anything erroneous, it could later be denied that it had fulfilled the conditions essential to Infallibility. The freer spirits, precursors of Modernism, began to feel that it might suit their policy. For, said they, nothing

but what has been defined *ex cathedra* is of faith, and to be received implicitly. Anything else will of course deserve respect, and will be submitted to as a disciplinary act, but it will change none of our convictions. Much indeed may be said for the position that the Pope is infallible *only* when he speaks *ex cathedra*, and no one knows when that is. So they went on quietly with their work of reconciling Rome and the modern mind, and at the close of the century the spread of Modernist opinions was fairly rapid.

I have no intention of giving even the briefest historical sketch of Modernism up to date. That is too long a story. But the search for truth, once begun, cannot be kept in leading strings ; extravagances will occur ; and not all searchers will come out of the thicket at the same place. It gradually became clear that Modernism is a name covering the most varied opinions. People have often differed as to whether a given book is Modernist or no. At one extreme men like Ehrhard, the historian, declare that 'we are all modern men to-day'[1] but offer only the most cautious criticisms of the Scholastic system. At the other extreme are thinkers who drive the symbolic view of truth so hard that even the personality of God dissolves in a fog of metaphor. There are Romanist scholars who write about the Gospels much as a conservative Protestant might do, then at a long interval the work of Loisy, which they disown, and whose Gospel criticism is more drastic than all

[1] *Der Katholizismus und das zwanzigste Jahrhundert*, p. 18.

but the most radical of non-Roman writers. Besides, work is being carried on in a variety of fields. History, theology, philosophy, social science —all have been cultivated. In spite of excesses, the labourers have everywhere been united by one deep feeling—the wish to get down to the bedrock of personal conviction. Weary of being ordered to accept everything on the authority of the Church, they have resolved to look at facts with their own eyes ; and what a man has once seen he cannot ever again be blind to. They have made up their minds—and of this no one has written more arrestingly than Tyrrell—that religion is the one great thing, whereas dogmas and institutions are but the transient media of religious life. Hence if modern men are to be held to Rome, the ways of Rome must change, and many a traditional form dating from the immemorial past must be made elastic in a living correlation to experience.

It may be said, if this be so, are not Modernists in reality Protestants under another name ? One part of the answer is that they themselves do not at all think so. They have been charged with Protestantism by the orthodox, but the innuendo has invariably been denied, and with obvious sincerity. Nothing was less congenial to Father Tyrrell, for instance, than the liberal Protestantism which has recently been so active on the Continent. He naturally felt it to be more a system of religious morality than a religion. However harshly he might speak of Rome, to the very end his mentality was Catholic through and through. With a deep

veneration for the truths championed by Protestantism, he felt chilled to the bone by its lack of tenderness, its hard severity, its implacable rationalism. It might suffice, he said, for one half of the soul—perhaps the best half ; the other half it starves. A religion for all men must be a religion of the whole man—catholic in depth as well as scope.

Modernists have also been repelled by what they feel to be the excessive individualism of Protestant religious life. With you, they say, it is each man for himself, and the infinite supporting power of the whole body of Christ is virtually ignored : the passion for independence makes, or tends to make, the Protestant an isolated unit, who may believe in corporate Christian life with his intelligence but not with his heart. His home is more to him than his Church. It will not do to give this a point-blank denial. No doubt, to take one example, the history of Scotland proves that the Church can evoke sacrifice and devotion of the sublimest type ; still, if we take Protestantism as a whole, the partial truth of the charge must be allowed. Wherever rationalism prevails, or a form of piety more mystical than Christian, the drift of feeling grows increasingly apathetic to the communion of saints, and men tend to live out their religion by themselves, careless of active participation in the collective life and of responsibility for its well-being. We have made a fetish of the idea that the true Church is invisible, known to none but God ; we have too much failed to mark that the Church of God *ought* to be visible in order that men who

seek it may know where it is to be found and be drawn into its redeeming fellowship.

A third reason why Modernists repudiate the form of religion known as Protestant is its alleged indifference to sacramental life. It may be rejoined at once that in the specifically Roman sense of sacraments we have no sacraments at all. We have no ceremonies, that is, through which grace is conveyed as it were automatically, purely on condition that the rite is correctly performed and that the receiver puts no definite obstacle in the way. As an idea that seems to us unchristian. But with the Church of the New Testament, we hold and we administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which the Lord Jesus Christ is present : present in Baptism to cleanse and quicken ; present in the Supper to give Himself to believing men as the meat and drink of their souls. No ceremony in the world could offer more than this. Further, it is a fair comment that the view of sacraments held by writers like Tyrrell is not the genuinely Roman view in the least. In his hands they become great symbolic appeals to emotion ; often, it would seem, with little or no relation to the historic Saviour.

It was to be expected that the official Roman Church would take very practical measures to deal with the operations of Modernism. The acts of Leo XIII.—who, for all his diplomatic caution, was scarcely less hostile to liberalism than his successor —were relatively mild. But after four years of observation, Pius X. took up the task with energy, and events followed each other fast. In the

summer of 1907 appeared two great manifestoes—the Syllabus of July 3 and the Encyclical of September 8. Of these the second was much the more effective in bringing out clearly the main principles in debate.

The Encyclical derives Modernism as a whole from a definite philosophy, to which the Pope gives the name of Agnosticism or Vital Immanence. This agnostic philosophy on the whole views religion as a merely human phenomenon, no more true objectively than art, and it sets Christianity on the same level with other faiths. Tracing religion as they do to a mere impulse of felt need, Modernists are wholly averse to dogma. This makes an end of revelation ; it wipes out for good and all the distinction of natural and supernatural ; and in particular it undermines the whole conception of Church authority as the final source of truth. We can see for ourselves what line the Pope was sure to take on such matters as the Modernist theory of Scripture, of Tradition, of the institution of sacraments by Christ and of the Church. Nothing offends Rome so much as the Modernist idea of ecclesiastical authority. A place is made for authority, because the Church must be kept together ; yet authority must be so exerted as to allow for freedom, for intellectual conscience, for doctrinal progress. And in official eyes it is a specially bad feature that some leaders of progress are laymen, which is to abolish utterly the essential Roman distinction of laity and priesthood. The Modernist view of history, and of the function of

historic criticism, it is held, are based on agnostic principles of a similar kind, the whole theory being dominated by the idea of natural evolution. In a word, Modernism is a collection of all the heresies, and no measures must be spared in its destruction. Two of these measures, espionage and delation, at once became the object of wide and merited resentment.

At the same time, it must be owned that Modernist efforts to convict the Pope of injustice in his generalised sketch of their position have failed. What the Encyclical has depicted is of course a type, and no portrait of a type will exactly suit a given individual. Nor is it surprising that the Pope will make no terms with the theory of natural evolution as a key to the nature and history of the Christian Church. We must recognise that if the Pope sincerely held this view of what Modernism is, he was not only entitled but bound in duty to adopt the severest measures of repression. The evil thing must at all costs be expelled from the spiritual body into which it had poured its venom. But most people will feel that the anti-Modernist oath, imposed on all clergy in 1910, has laid a nearly insupportable load on the truth-loving Roman scholar. Part of the formula to be sworn to is as follows: 'I adhere with my whole soul to all the condemnations, declarations, and prescriptions contained in the Encyclical *Pascendi* and in the Decree *Lamentabili*, particularly with respect to what is called the history of dogmas.' It seems the death-warrant of the disinterested search for truth.

Let us now turn to the question whether Modernism is compatible with the existence of the Roman Church. Can the two live together in a single organism ? It is significant that men like Tyrrell and Loisy plainly avow the aim of inducing the Papacy to break with its past ; Tyrrell indeed gave expression to the view that Romanism, like Judaism, may be obliged to pass through death that it may live again in a greater and nobler form. As things are, it has reached the intrinsic limits of development and must now decrease. He goes so far as to acknowledge that the Church in its present character, and as it has existed from the second century, had no choice but to reject Modernism. But this is to admit that the principles of Modernism, far from being a prolongation of past tendencies, involve a breach with the centuries. Rome cannot possibly assent to a reading of primitive Christian facts that finds in them no more than an impulse or germinal idea, awaiting the evolution of history. Something far more definite stands out at the beginning, something fixed and in itself final—namely, a Divine commission to Peter and his successors in office as the vicegerents of Christ. To say that dogma or hierarchy arose purely in the course of natural evolution, under the influence of ideas working freely and in obedience to laws of their own, is to say that they now present themselves with no more than human authority, and that as evolution moves on their use and value may disappear. In the realm of creed and constitution, therefore, Rome can tolerate no open questions.

She cannot even permit the right of historical criticism to be discussed, or the claims of lay religion, or the place of separate nationalities within the Church. To her there is one legitimate view, and only one, of religious and theological authority. Either the Pope is infallible or he is fallible; there is no middle way. A spiritual authority which should rest on the fact of Christ and of redemption as an experience and attest itself freely and spontaneously to the Christian mind, is for her no authority at all: men are only free to bow under the absolute and unconditioned power of Rome. Compromise is out of question.

The punitive methods of the Pope were of course met, on the Modernist side, by the device of evasion. These men were unable to divest themselves of scholarly habits at a moment's notice, and it became needful to scrutinise the Encyclical with the utmost care with a view to the discovery and enlargement of loopholes. I have already said that a few found comfort in the fact that the document deals with a certain type of thought which, as set forth, probably fits no one.

This gave an opening for sharp distinctions, which was quickly seized. It could be argued by any given Modernist that the Papal condemnation left *him* untouched, and that a document of whose general tenor he could thus approve gave him all the liberty he required for his scientific work. Others took the line, for which precedents were supplied by the conduct of well-known prelates after the Vatican Council of 1870, of making their

submission, but in what may be called a Pickwickian sense. 'The priest,' it is contended, 'in submitting himself to a decision of this kind acts simply as an officer does who subordinates his private judgment to that of his general in the field.' But the Pope had foreseen this. What he aimed at was a change in opinion, a definite withdrawal of conviction. Manifestly, little either of authority or of infallibility would be left if at will the answer could be returned that his pronouncements held good only in the field of external discipline. Accordingly, after a delay of three years, Pius X. struck a shattering blow, as we have seen, by ordering the administration of the anti-Modernist oath to all priests, confessors, professors, and preachers. The Catholic press did its best to soften the blow by urging that the pontifical formula taught no new doctrine, but merely repeated the declarations of the Councils of Trent and of the Vatican, which all priests had before accepted in the seminary. In France, in England, in Italy, the oath was taken quietly and all but universally, though with many anonymous protests against a fresh act of violence. Even Modernist leaders counselled submission, the only alternative being to secede. And secession was not to be thought of. 'Too many,' said one writer, 'have already left. Scientific liberty has gained nothing and religious liberty has suffered gravely. Though Liberalism and Modernism have the look of being vanquished, they will re-form ere long.'

It would be imprudent to indulge in prophecy

as to the future of Modernism. At present, beyond all doubt, the Pope has triumphed outwardly, not in the sense that he has convinced his opponents, but in the sense that he has driven them underground. But one or two things may be said.

It is clear we must wish well to a movement inspired by the love of truth. It is a gain to the Christian cause that intellectual candour should grow and spread ; and Protestantism, it is certain, will not flourish by the mere weakness and decay of Rome. The Roman Church ministers to so large a portion of the human race that no friend of piety can fail to wish for her a large and ever larger number of truth-loving minds. Hence it is with pathetic interest rather than applause that we note the Modernist effort to find chinks and crannies in each new Papal document, through which the claim to free inquiry may again creep. It is a short step from this to the position that Rome alone makes true progress possible by stamping out error with infallible authority.

Again, it is well known that many of the best Modernists set their hopes from time to time on the advent of a new Pope. But it is natural to ask whether any Pope could be a match for the Papal system. The powers of any single occupant of Peter's chair are very limited. He has to work under conditions of which the Vatican Decrees, and what is often called Curialism, form an essential part. If then it might seem as if great things may be looked for from a liberal Pope who should swing the Church on to freer lines in virtue

of his personal infallibility, it has also to be remembered that a liberal Pope would not have the faintest chance of election, and that extremely narrow scope is now left for his private judgment. He is there to hand on traditions, to prolong the lines of history; and this means a constantly narrowing initiative. To Papalism the whole Modernist effort is absolutely opposed. In Tyrrell's exposition, the Pope is not a dictator, but the supreme mouthpiece of truth reached by the universal Christian mind; and each member of the Church, lay or clerical, has a part to do in ascertaining and clarifying the truth to be set forth. But every Pope must condemn this, and it makes not the slightest difference whether he be Leo XIII. or Pius X. or Benedict XV. To criticise the actual path of development taken by the Church, with Papal Infallibility as its latest outcome, is to exercise private judgment; and *that* means 'accepting the Church's teaching just so long as it agrees with what you on other grounds persuade yourselves to be true.' Modernists use their own minds, and by that act they cease to be Romanists *pur sang*.

Other difficulties, plain to the bystander, have thus been summarised: 'The Modernists have no consistent programme; what they share in common is more negative than positive. Different interests are emphasised, by one party that of science, by another that of piety. Also they underestimate the enormous power of resistance and the means of compulsion at the disposal of the

official Church. Their ideal, too, is self-contradictory, for a Catholic Church, reformed in their sense, would no longer be the body we have hitherto known by that name. And finally, even in their greatest leaders we miss that last and deepest note of personal religion—the thought of justification by faith.'[1] It will always be easy for the Roman authorities to discredit popularly a band of thinkers who in great part write anonymously, and who have discovered no agreement in the positive truth they wish to teach.

But we cannot withhold admiration from great souls like Tyrrell, who bravely paid the extreme price of sincerity. All honour to men, not unworthy to be named with him, who to threats and denunciations made reply that they must abide by the truth which they had seen. At least they have left to Rome a legacy of problems. They have left, too, a disposition and a method which no external force can ever crush. It is not impossible —more we cannot say—that one day their spirit may prevail. They may be weak ; but if the world is built for truth it is certain, in the words of Bacon, that 'a lame man on the right road will come to his journey's end sooner than the fleetest runner on a wrong one.'

[1] Holl, *Der Modernismus*, pp. 47-48.

X *The Psychology of Religion, Old and New*[1]

In the last fifteen or twenty years, as all interested students know, the Psychology of Religion has come to fill an ever more important place in the theological field. While no well-instructed person would contend that the subject has only begun to exist during this generation, at least it has clearly entered on a new phase, and it would be difficult to set limits to the possible meaning or scope of its future development. The simple fact is that this particular branch of Psychology, which used to form a minor part of some other philosophical or theological discipline, has broken away from under its tutelage, and begun an independent growth. That such things should happen is a law of scientific progress. Obeying an impulse which can be traced to Hume, it has insisted on separating questions of the truth and value of religion, with which it was customarily bound up, from the prior question of what actually goes on in the religious man's mind, and on isolating this last topic for exact study. Workers in the new field say simply : Let us ask, *sine ira et studio*, without preoccupations of a controversial or apologetic kind, precisely what happens in the human soul which we take to be passing through a specifically religious experience.

[1] *The Pilgrim*, January 1921.

As Professor Coe has expressed it, ' What is needed is an examination of the facts as such without reference to their possible bearing upon theology and philosophy.' Probably to do what Professor Coe thinks ought to be done is not quite so easy as it looks. There has been a good deal of discussion, one time and another, whether any ' fact ' can be perceived without some kind of theory about its meaning, at all events a ' fact ' of the spiritual order. But the principle in itself is all right, and undoubtedly the effort to obey it is sincere.

Another new feature in the work of recent investigators is their keenness about exact methods. The way of introspection, of looking into their own minds when religiously affected, counts for a good deal less with them than with their grandfathers. They still analyse with enthusiastic care the deposits of the historical religions in order to get down to their psychical roots, but they want more than this. It is felt that above all we must cross-question people whose piety is beyond dispute. If they lived in former times, we can reach the best of them in the religious classics ; if they are our contemporaries, the Americans have proved that we can get not a few of them to fill up schedules.

Again, it has been observed, with varying surprise and censure, that everything, or nearly everything, is grist to the mill of the new study. The queerest phenomena, however irrelevant at first sight, may yield new insights. The weirdest facts are to be thankfully received ; they may prove to be full of hid treasure. More than might at first

be expected may be drawn from inquiries into the religion of different ages, sexes, classes. It is important not to miss the pathological aspects of religion, or, to quote the title of a French book, 'the maladies of the religious sentiment'; for the quality of religion as a feeling cannot but be closely connected with such things as insanity, fatigue, the awakening of sex life, revolutionary fanaticism, war. In addition, there is the trackless and smoky region of the subconscious.

In the light of this patient and hospitable research it has seemed to a few inconsiderate minds as if we were on the eve of a revolution in the theological world; indeed, as if it were all over with theology proper. Why talk about fundamental dogmas or credal norms or doctrinal systems, when our one aim ought to be to find out the beliefs that *work*, and stick to these? Discover what religious people do hold, and have always held, it is suggested, and you may safely leave the secondary problem of what they ought to hold to the leisured dogmatician. Besides, the variety of types of religious life is obviously very large, and can it nevertheless be supposed that real religion ought to be the same for everybody? Dogma crushes freedom and spontaneity; Psychology gives to all the widest scope and opens its arms to pieties of every sort and condition. As an ardent investigator of popular belief about God put it, 'It doesn't so much matter whether it 's true or not, but does it function?' On the other hand, it is occasionally felt that the truth of belief, so far from being negligible, is of crucial importance,

and that just here the psychologist can help us. In an excellent essay published not long ago there occurs this sentence. 'I hope,' says the writer, 'that I have made it clear that few things would be of more value, whether for medical science, for everyday conduct, or for religion, than such a reinterpretation of some of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity as would make them intellectually possible of acceptance to the modern man. And,' he continues, 'Psychology has opened up lines along which one may look to see effected that reconciliation between science and religion, the attempt to procure which led to an impasse a generation ago.' The doubtful value of this suggestion we may have to canvass at a later point.

We shall not grow excited over the idea of a theological revolution on psychological lines if only we recall the obvious fact that the Psychology of Religion is no modern novelty, but in some form or other has long been at work. Very early it was practised by those who strove to discredit the popular faith of their own time, as by Lucretius, who held that fear was the main root of worship of the gods. But pious thinkers too went in for psychology; Plutarch for instance, and notably some of the greatest Neoplatonists. Mayer, who has written well upon the subject, quotes from St. Augustine the striking words: *Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino.* The *Confessions*, like all religious autobiographies, is more than half a great psychological treatise, the more valuable as a source that the writer's aim is

less scientific than spiritual. In more modern times, to pass over the mediaeval mystics, there is the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* of Spinoza, Hume's *Natural History of Religion*, Pascal's *Pensées*, and above all Schleiermacher's *Addresses to the Cultured Despisers of Religion*. Most of the important books on the Philosophy of Religion that have appeared for half a century, like those of the Cairds, Martineau, Höffding, and Pfleiderer, have been full of psychology; and Christian theologians have done something, though not perhaps enough, to reap the benefit of this earlier inquiry, carried on, we may say, in the study and the home rather than the laboratory, and use it for the elucidation of Christian experience.

I think a little reflection will show that Theology proper (which after all, as has been said, is 'the Greek for thinking about God,' and not, at least in the first place, 'thinking about our own nice feelings') has a good deal to gain from the exact scrutiny of the beliefs, aspirations, and emotions of deeply religious men and women, though the second kind of 'thinking' can never take the place of the first. Religious psychology helps in a variety of ways. It helps, for example, by forcing us to clear up our ideas of what a religious state of mind is. If we are going to scrutinise the validity of religious faith, let us first be quite sure we know what we are talking of. Once we have attained precise views on this point, and can recognise specific or characteristic piety when we see it, it will be a considerably easier task to cut out the hetero-

geneous elements which had wrongly come to be tied up with religious faith—such as beliefs of a superstitious or magical or purely scientific kind. The possible effect of this in simplifying theology is evident ; some unintelligible things, which kept their place by force of custom, will drop out, though not at all, let us hope, the ' mystery ' which is a vital element of all religion. Again, psychology helps by carrying out a closer study of great historical instances of religion at its best—the lives of prophets, saints, reformers—whose interest in piety may be one-sided, if we like to call it so, but from whom just for that reason we can best learn what it means for the soul to be absorbed in God. If we want to know what music is, we listen to great musicians, to whom music was everything : let the theologian go and do likewise. It helps too by proving that there are different types of Christian piety, and that therefore precise and elaborate schemes of conversion and sanctification, which used to be laid down in all sincerity, cannot possibly be sound, because they said that the soul can only be made Christian in a certain way, which is not the case : nothing can be necessary which does not as a matter of fact happen. It may be that people hear the word ' conversion ' so infrequently nowadays that there is no great risk of their being taken in by these old schemes, but to get rid of them a generation ago must have been felt as a huge relief. Again, religious psychology helps by exposing the falsity of the view often found equally in pure orthodoxy and in rationalism, that religion lies in

submitting one's intelligence to a creed—longer for orthodoxy, shorter for rationalism. Religion, it turns out, is like friendship ; and just as no one who has ever had a friend would say that friendship *consists in* knowledge about the other man, though it does imply it, but in fellowship with him, so too psychological analysis brings out the fact that personal religion, which also implies knowledge about God, contains this knowledge as a firm framework, so to speak, wrapped in the living body of worship, communion, and obedience. It helps us in reading our New Testament, particularly such things as the story of St. Paul's conversion. It helps those who want to know what were the religious interests felt to be at stake in the great controversies of Church history, and why Arius, to take the best example, could make no permanent impression. Last, but very far from least, it helps to answer the question how different sides of the Gospel affect the modern man, what aspects of Christ are actually saving people at the present moment.

We may therefore expect to find what in point of fact we do find, that Theology proper has usually included some Psychology of Religion. Indeed, no theology has ever been quite free from it. We have only to turn the pages of an ordinary theological text-book and look through the sections dealing with redemption as an experience to be assured of this. To inquire in what attitude men receive the forgiveness of sins, why and how they repent, exactly what it means to have faith in God, in what ways the new system of Christian

ideas takes possession of the mind, or whether it is of any use to explain 'regeneration' by events and changes in the 'subliminal'—what is this but psychology? Good or bad, there is no escape from it. After all, the objects of Christian faith are accessible and intelligible to us only as they evoke from us a spiritual resonance and create within us a new life. It is a man's experience of Christ that authorises him to make statements—other than those of a purely historical character—about Christ. Not that in religion our knowledge is directed primarily to our own religious feelings and perceptions; but through these we do know God. They are the condition of our knowing Him, and therefore must be examined by the student of Christianity in action.

Christian apologetic, too, is bound to take up various matters with the contemporary Psychology of Religion. Everybody knows that in recent works on religious origins, specially those emanating from the anthropological school, it is frequently argued that men took to religion from fear; they thought everything about them had a soul and therefore had to be appeased and made terms with, and religion is the name for political dealings with all such dangerous or uncanny objects. If this theory were true, it would be all over with religion as a permanent aspect of the best human life, and it is Theology's business, accordingly, to show that it is not true, or is at least a very small and extremely misleading part of the truth. It has to bring out the fact that religion is not and never really was

pseudo-science of this kind, but has invariably risen beyond a merely animistic view of surrounding objects to a Power or Powers superior alike to the individual and to the world in which he lives—to an order of destiny, in short, with which man must find reconciliation. This is a fair example of the necessity Theology is under of keeping in vigilant touch with the results given out by religious psychology.

By way of example, we may say that in Schleiermacher we see how much the psychology of religion can do for Theology, and in Hume and Feuerbach how damagingly its alleged conclusions can be applied for the ends of scepticism.

Psychology, then, can aid Theology, but can it step into the other's place ? Have we reached the limit of theological inquiry when we have seen and described the state of the believer's mind, and decided what are for him the causes of belief ? Surely it is only ignorance or confusion that could think so. There are few things more exasperating than the foolish obstinacy with which some ardent people blink this issue. How many romantic studies of soul-life one has read which appear to be inspired by the amiable conviction that studies of soul-life are all that any reasonable person can want ! Wernle once remarked that he was tempted to call religious psychology a clever attempt to make faith ridiculous, and while this was only his humour, and believing men ask nothing better than to have the working of the Gospel in the heart inquired into, yet the final question after all about religious ideas

is not whether they are curious, or fascinating, or tenacious, or coloured by emotion, but whether they are *true*. If we forget this, it becomes quite natural to diagnose religion as a form of nervous complaint or a vestigial relic of ancestor-worship. And after a surfeit of books on the phenomena of the religious mind—phenomena in many instances abnormal, in some best forgotten—it is always a relief to meet with a healthily objective writer whose main concern, from first to last, is not to enumerate influential beliefs but to find out simply what ought to be believed. Much worthless flummery has been poured out with a view to proving that the truth of doctrines is of small consequence, provided they are emotionally stimulating and of high social utility.

The upshot of any such procedure obviously is the framing of theories made *for* the believer, but not in any sense *by* him. Nothing can prevent this except to regard the principle as axiomatic that the investigator must start with an idea of religion furnished, or at least prompted, by his own experience. His study must be congenial, with attachments to what he recognises as best in his own life ; otherwise he will inevitably be found explaining religion by what is not religion in the least. As it has been put by Professor Pringle-Pattison : ' The religious man's experience may be overlaid with accretions and survivals . . . but the fundamental presuppositions of any experience must be accepted from the experience itself ; they may be explained, but not explained away.' Nobody dreams of

questioning this axiom in the field of art. But Christian theologians have too often allowed philosophers of no particular sense for piety—Hegel and Strauss are fair instances—to tell them what religion is. Similarly, it is by no means unusual to have psychologists, whose mind has never been crossed by the thought that in essence religion is fellowship with God, laboriously explain that religion is this or that, or indeed anything at all except what those who have lived in it know it to be. If we were dealing with any other subject, it would be at once agreed by acclamation that this is not the way to make progress. Its only result can be an academic and artificial conception wholly out of relation to what is going on in the bosoms of mankind. Against this sort of thing the first safeguard is sincerity of religious life and belief in the inquirer himself, who is thereby qualified to distinguish genuine piety when he sees it.

The challenge of this word 'belief' touches the centre of the shield. The question whether psychology can replace theology is really equivalent to asking whether religion includes or does not include convictions which, if true, must profoundly affect our whole view of the universe and our conduct in it. If it means anything real to say 'religion can exist without an object,' then the psychologist alone need be called in. But this is too much like the American statesman of the Civil War period who is said to have sent out notices to his friends that he was going to be married, but without mentioning to whom. There is a passage in Max

Beerbohm's *Seven Men* which at this point it is not unfitting to transcribe.

> 'I was very near to reverence when he said he had another book coming out soon. I asked if I might ask what kind of book it was to be.
>
> '"My poems," he answered. Rothenstein asked if this was to be the title of the book. The poet meditated on this suggestion, but said he rather thought of giving the book no title at all. "If a book is good in itself——" he murmured, waving his cigarette.
>
> 'Rothenstein objected that absence of title might be bad for the sale of a book. "If," he urged, "I went into a bookseller's and said simply, 'Have you got ?' or 'Have you a copy of ?' how would they know what I wanted ?"
>
> '"Oh, of course I should have my name on the cover," Soames answered earnestly.'

Expunge the object of religious belief, and religion has no name but that of the man who holds it. All you can say is that it is Brown's religion, or Jones's, or Robinson's.

We have the less need to labour this point that it is conceded in the results arrived at by religious psychology itself. Amongst the things which that science has to ascertain are the meanings, motives, tendencies, and persuasions with which religious experiences are charged, and in the process one fact invariably comes out, viz., the crucial importance of the believer's interest in the *truth* of his beliefs.

That is a part of being religious : you want to know if certain things are so. In all pious ideas, there is an instinctive claim to objective or transcendental validity. A full psychology cannot avoid registering this keenly felt interest in truth, though some writers have tried to ; every genuine religion has a vital stake in it, and in point of fact no historical religion can be named which does not tackle the question of the truth of belief in some fashion, with the intention of solving it. Now, for the psychologist this very intention is a datum ; he is bound to follow it up into its varied forms of expression, and ask how much it means for religious life. If only he keeps steadily before him this hunger for veracity that lies at the heart of faith, he will never dream that you undermine religion by explaining it.

Of course every one knows this by instinct who has ever come near a great religious figure, of to-day or of the past. The prophet has a passionate interest in truth ; to his own mind he exists chiefly as the vehicle for a message. The psychologist, watching him, has to note very specially that the prophet as such is not a psychologist at all ; he is not concerned with what is going on in his own mind, but with God. No prophet ever lived for whom the first event in his prophetic experience was not his being seized by God and turned aside from common paths and made to cry, ' Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' The prophet, in short, is a man who has been *called*—not by way of auto-suggestion, or psychology could exhaust the matter, but by God. That at least is his own undimmed

conviction, and one really cannot see why he should not know best. The words of Jeremiah are a type for all prophets : ' If I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain.'

Prophetic religion is not indeed a metaphysic, but if we cannot see that it has metaphysical implications, by which it stands or falls, we have missed the prophet's drift. No thinker whose mind has been kindled by Christ—Himself a prophet but more—could ever be satisfied with inquiry about the place and working of religion in human souls and human communities, to the neglect of the final cosmic issues. Just because Christ has brought his spiritual and moral nature fully awake, he knows that it is not mere curiosity but rather conscience which forces him to ask, Is there a Heavenly Father ? or, Can sin be forgiven ? If the idea of God is not simply the product of human wishes, as so far as psychology is concerned it might be, how much more is it, and what grounds have we for a decision ? Do we postulate God simply because we have a use for Him ? Or is it not rather that we react upon His movement in history and in our lives, by that constraining awareness which the Psalmist expressed once for all in the lines : ' Whither shall I go from Thy spirit ? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ? ' These are questions which the religious man will ask, and not all the immanent psychology in the world will

silence him. They are metaphysical questions, for our answer to them determines our deepest view of the Ultimate Reality. And if we survey the stretching history of faith, if we consult the great literature which faith has called into being by its ineradicable instinct of self-expression, we shall find that the believer in God has never at any time been able to give himself an explanation of his belief which did not spring fundamentally from a sense that he had been made the subject of what is nothing less than Divine revelation. The conviction that God has revealed Himself, thus awakening faith, is the fount of living religion.

There is something here which is as irrelevant to psychology as falling in love is to statistics. It is the whole side of experience which we call *meaning*. When we read the sixth chapter of Isaiah, or the narrative of Jesus' baptism, or the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, we get clean away from interest in purely descriptive accounts of feelings and ideas and volitions, and we fix upon the thing that really counts—God and the human spirit face to face. God is making Himself known ; man, by the inward eye, is seeing Him. And by seeing God, he has learned in principle the meaning of all that is. Henceforward he works outward from the centre ; sure of God, he becomes ever more and more sure that life has a godlike purpose. He has reached convictions which pass out beyond his own mind and grasp Reality. In regard to these convictions he is now certain of two things—they are true, and they are of absolute worth.

There are, then, two great issues on which religious psychology, or Theology in so far as it becomes purely psychological, can give us no light whatsoever. These are, first, What is the meaning of Christianity? and second, Is Christianity true? Many forms of Christianity have been known, and unless there is available some trustworthy guidance on through the maze to Christian religion in its authentic shape, the searcher is undone. Can a science which is of necessity descriptive and nothing more aid us with this problem? To it all forms of religion are alike; for all it allows a fair field and no favour. Whether the type of piety be mystical or legal or monastic or even Buddhist is not for it of the slightest consequence. There is no ground on which, merely as psychology, it should assign a preferential position even to the faith of Jesus Christ Himself. The problem is a crucial one; psychology is patently unable to take it up; it follows that some other discipline must step in to meet the challenge of inquiry; and for this discipline the obvious name is Theology.

And is Christianity true? What proof can be offered that the claim of the Christian message to be valid is well and soundly based? Perhaps the feeling that psychology can cover the whole ground by itself has insensibly been encouraged by the common impression that Jesus neither offered nor possessed any proofs of the truths He taught. I agree with a recent writer in thinking this view wholly mistaken. As he puts it, 'We cannot doubt that Jesus clearly knew, not only what He believed,

but also why He believed it.'[1] When He argued that the God who clothed the grass would much more clothe His human children ; when, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, He found in the father's unreserved forgiveness a picture of the love of God, He was laying before those who listened to Him what are actually amongst the most powerful arguments for faith. Theology, be it reverently said, has only followed in the Master's steps when, transcending psychology, it has constructed its proofs of truth—often proofs, as we are all aware, of a lamentably non-religious kind. But at least in addressing itself to the vast and commanding problem of the truth of the Gospel, it has taken Christianity seriously. It has not trifled with great issues ; in particular, it has not yielded to the delusion that empiricism can either test or vindicate belief.

[1] Professor John Baillie in the *Expositor* for January 1919.

XI *The Subliminal Consciousness in Theology*[1]

In recent years a revived tendency has made itself felt, at times in unexpected quarters, to explain some obscure points in theology by reference to the subconscious part of mental life. The nature of God, the inherent Deity of Christ, the experiences of conversion and regeneration, the prospect of life after death—on all these locks this key has been tried. We have no cause to deny that the terms 'subconscious' and 'subliminal' do indicate, whether usefully or not, an element which plays a genuine though a minor part in the life of mind; but for a considerable time now these terms have come to have a rather alarming sound for people who care for clear thinking.[2] The late Professor William James may have seen reason to change his opinion, but at the outset he was keenly alive to the drawbacks of the subliminal hypothesis. In his *Principles of Psychology*, issued in 1890, he writes in allusion to the distinction between conscious and

[1] *Review and Expositor*, 1921.

[2] 'The looseness with which the word "unconscious" is at present used,' writes Professor C. D. Broad, 'is a psychological scandal of the first magnitude' (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1923, p. 173). As an instance we may take Coriat's statement (*Meaning of Dreams*, p. 6) that 'the unconscious is our true self, not our conscious thinking, with its rationalisation of all our mental processes'—and this though the author later declares that 'unconscious' is the equivalent of 'infantile.'

unconscious: 'It is the sovereign means for believing what one likes in psychology, and of turning what might become a science into a tumbling-ground for whimsies.'

Still, aspects of experience do exist for the explanation of which the distinction is of relative value. The beam of attention flickers like a searchlight on the clouds. Its intensity of concentration shifts perpetually from more to less; its range of apprehension broadens or narrows from one instant to the next. We are dimly aware of much that never moves into the focus. Subcurrents of thought, feeling, motive, cross and mingle in subtle patterns while to all appearance we are lost in other things. If I sit reading in a garden, decently absorbed in my book, I am all the while partially conscious of the greenness of turf, the song of birds, the scent of a rose; also in an undertone of expectancy I may feel that presently a friend will join me. Or we can recapture an experience just over: indeed, by turning on it the full glare of retrospection we can lift into prominence some features of it which at the moment failed to excite our interest, as if we put secret ink close to the fire. Thus we can turn back and decide how often the time-piece has struck, although when it was actually striking the number of strokes escaped us. On general grounds, it may be argued that here the law of continuity has something to say; mental processes do not absolutely cease to be at the point where they cease to be conscious. These phenomena have naturally engaged the interest of many,

and in whatever light we view them, they at least form the fullest and clearest proof that the whole of experience does not fall within that succession of distinct apprehensions due to the effort of focused attention. More exists in mind than shows upon the surface. It is a reasonable theory that the subconscious and the unconscious are storehouses of mental elements kept for the time being in latency. But the caution with which the idea must be used by way of explanation is suggested by Mr. Field's remark that 'anything in us which is neither conscious nor physical is therefore something unknowable and indescribable, or indescribable except in purely negative terms.'[1]

The tendency to plead that this subterranean region holds the key to various enigmas of the religious life probably owes something to the popularity of phrases like 'unconscious faith' or 'unconscious Christianity.' These phrases are supposed to have a clear sense, but they are in fact extremely obscure. When, in a brief expression, we describe a man as being an unconscious believer, the fact to which we are pointing is not that deep in his underworld a psychical disposition has been formed of which he knows nothing, but which none the less is faith in God. We mean that he has had experiences which he either failed to notice or neglected; or just as when we speak of a friend as being unwittingly in love, the real fact is that the man believes quite consciously in *something*, in righteousness or love or good men and

[1] G. C. Field in *Mind*, October 1922, p. 414.

women, and people who want to say that implicitly or constructively this belief is equivalent to faith in God, speak of Him, in natural but misleading terms, as an 'unconscious Christian.' The state of his mind is really a definitely conscious and morally qualified state, but so far the realised object of his interest and faith is something else than God, and he is habitually ignoring what he *really* needs. Obviously the perils of vague terminology are great.

To some writers this vagueness and inaccuracy have become so painful that they simply turn their back on the problem. Charlatans, they feel, have marked the subject for their own. It hardly seems possible to obtain a clear view of the maelstrom of emotion stirred up in hysteria or catalepsy. Even to glance at it might entangle them in the worst excesses of spiritualism. They recall, perhaps, Huxley's answer to a friend who had invited him to a seance : 'It may be all true for anything I know to the contrary, but really I cannot get up any interest in the subject. I never cared for gossip in my life, and disembodied gossip, such as these worthy ghosts supply their friends with, is not more interesting to me than any other.' The circumstances, it cannot be denied, are unpropitious ; yet the subconscious in theology is an actual and urgent problem. To dismiss it on a quibble is hardly to play the game. It will not do to define the 'psychical' as 'the content of consciousness,' and straightway ride off upon the argument that 'the unconscious psychical' is a contradiction in terms. The plain fact is we

cannot tell where consciousness leaves off. Processes appear to lie out beyond the margin of attention in any of its degrees. It looks as if change might take place across the line either way, as if transmarginal processes might come over the boundary and move up towards the focus of attention, while impressions just beyond the line might fade and sink away. We cannot but ask how or in what form our interests, our knowledges and memories, our fixed principles of conduct or our deepest affections have potential existence at those times when they are, as we say, 'out of mind.' In some shape or other they have a present basis, since many, if not all, can be revived either by volition or by strong external impact.[1]

Three views on the matter may be taken. First, it may be held that the unconscious ought to be described in mental terms, and that we are completely justified in speaking of unconscious desires, emotions, wishes, or fears. But an emotion that is not felt, a fear not present to a mind, seems to be the same thing as nothing. Again, it may be held that everything may be put in terms of modifications of the brain, and that Carpenter's phrase, 'unconscious cerebration' is all we want. Or,

[1] 'Of course, what persists is not the experience, but is the trace which the experience leaves. And there is no more reason to suppose that the trace of an experience resembles it or any other experience than to suppose that deafness resembles an attack of scarlet fever. The plain fact is that we know nothing at all about the intrinsic nature of traces, and that we ought therefore studiously to avoid all phrases which suggest that we do know something about it' (C. D. Broad, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, p. 186).

lastly, and here we seem to approach the truth more nearly, as also to make full allowance for any truth contained in the first theory, it may be contended that all our data permit us to do is to say that ' the unconscious ' is a symbol of permanent mental dispositions or tendencies, of a mental structure which manifests itself in a particular kind of mental activity. In that case, we shall be on our guard against the use of language which implies that a past mental event or experience persists, as an event, in the unconscious. In particular, we shall avoid hypostatising the unconscious and ascribing to it active and influential qualities which could hardly be more definite and concrete if it were another person alongside, or beneath, the conscious person whose experience we are trying to analyse. Every one knows how quite recently the laws of nature figured in argument as sufficient in themselves to govern the universe, and it was forgotten that, as eminent men of science now tell us, a law of nature explains nothing, and has no governing power, being simply a descriptive formula, often erroneous, pointing to similarities which we think we have observed. It would be a blunder no less culpable if the careless were now to personify the unconscious, as the *Doppelgänger* of the conscious personality we know. But in any case, when we are inquiring whether the conception of the subconscious is of value in theology, which theory of its nature we adopt is of little consequence. Indeed, we might permissibly reject the subconscious view of conversion without committing ourselves to any

special theory of what the subconscious is, if we saw reason to believe that the true explanation of the facts lies inside the circle of clear consciousness, not outside.

At this point it may be desirable to glance at the notion of a subliminal self, put forward by the late F. W. H. Myers in his book, *Human Personality*. It cannot be too emphatically said that this as an idea is wholly different from the subconscious, and that without loss to this discussion we may leave it on one side. Myers distinctly says that his theory is meant to explain such phenomena as 'double personality.' In his own words: 'I suggest that the stream of consciousness in which we habitually live is not the only consciousness which exists in connexion with our organism.' For him there are different subliminal strata, and all of these strata are conscious, though we cannot be sure that they are all conscious of each other. Each of us, in fact, contains more than one self. It is plain this is quite different from the subconscious theory proper, though by Myers himself, as well as some writers who profess to follow him, the two things have been confused. By definition the subconscious is not conscious; the hypothesis is, rather, that phenomena exist which are mental in spite of the fact that we are unaware of them. What Myers, on the other hand, is arguing for is not a non-conscious background to the one mind, but two or more distinguishable consciousnesses. As an explanation of the facts of mental pathology, for example, the disintegration of personality, this may

be plausible ; but it has little or no bearing on ordinary religious experience. The distinction just indicated between the subliminal self or selves and subconscious process, is of capital importance,[1] and it justifies us in passing from Myers's theory of different minds in connexion with the same organism, and confining our interest to the subconscious as such. Once this is understood, there can be no harm in our using ' subliminal ' freely as a variant. The term has a good sense of its own altogether irrespective of Myers's usage.

The idea of the subconscious (including the unconscious) has been employed as a key to at least three major problems in theology.

(1) It has been applied to the nature of God, by writers of very different schools. In the nineteenth century Hartmann, combining the metaphysic of Hegel with that of Schopenhauer, defines the Absolute as the Unconscious—as the unconscious unity, that is, of Will and Idea. Idea at this point means the logical structure of thought and being. The supreme aspect, however, of the unconscious Absolute is not Reason but Will, a will devoid of reason when it passes out of potentiality into actual willing. This is not the place for a full discussion of Hartmann's metaphysical but not altogether unqualified pessimism, although it certainly appears to be no accident that pessimism should thus go along with an effort to set unconsciousness at the heart of Deity.

[1] See a careful argument by Prof. John Baillie in the *Expository Times*, vol. xxiv. pp. 353 ff.

Again, we may adduce such a speculative mystic of the Middle Ages as Eckhart. According to him, a distinction exists between God and the godhead. The godhead, or absolute Essence, is by intrinsic nature unknowable, even to itself; all things lie concealed in the darkness of its potentiality. Timelessly it rises somehow to consciousness, but it is not conscious of itself. And to unite ourselves with the godhead, so conceived, we must perform a complete renunciation of personality; by doing this we pierce inwards, beyond God, into the abyss of the godhead proper. Thus the highest truth concerning God is that His nature does not partake of consciousness, but is the nameless and supra-essential One, detached from every quality, even goodness. We err when we interpret His deepest being in terms of our loftiest rational or ethical experience; in so far as He is apprehensible at all, it is through the ecstatic rapture that supervenes when clear moral thought has vanished and the entranced soul swoons in mists of feeling. Such is the essence of Deity that other approach there is and can be none.

In James's captivating Gifford Lectures on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* one sentence occurs which, taken at its face value, points in the same direction. Starting with the view that man identifies his real being with the higher part of himself and becomes aware that this higher part of him is continuous with a 'more' of the same quality, which is operative in the universe at large, James proceeds: 'Let me propose, as a hypothesis, that

whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life.'[1] On the surface of it this means that Deity, as we touch it, is identical in quality or kind with our subconsciousness—the subconscious in us being, so to speak, a tiny inlet of the Divine ocean. Whether James actually intends this to be inferred may, of course, be questioned, but it is a position into which any thinker might naturally enough slip who regarded the subconscious as more important for religion than consciousness.

(2) In Christology the hypothesis has become most familiar through its employment, in 1910, by the late Dr. Sanday in a work entitled *Christologies Ancient and Modern*. To explain the special being of God in Christ, the writer sets out from the Divine presence within the human soul, and here he takes up a position which, if sound, is obviously very important. 'The proper seat or *locus*,' he writes, 'of all Divine indwelling or Divine action upon the human soul, is the subliminal consciousness.'[2] Here I may interject the remark that although Sanday claims to follow Myers at this point, he scarcely does so; the subliminal with him is not, as we have seen it to be with Myers, a quasi-independent stream of consciousness; he freely describes it rather as subconscious or even unconscious. This, however, by the way. In contrast with conscious states, he next argues, the

[1] Pp. 508, 512. [2] P. 159.

subconscious are 'subtler, intenser, further reaching, more penetrating. It is something more than a mere metaphor when we describe the subconscious and unconscious states as more "profound."'[1] For proof he turns to mysticism, finding the characteristic experience of the mystic located not in the upper sphere of waking mind, but in the lower deeps.

The special interest lies in his application of this to the Incarnation. As he roundly puts it: 'The same or the corresponding subliminal consciousness is the proper seat or *locus* of the Deity of the incarnate Christ.'[2] We ought, he adds, to draw 'a horizontal line between the upper human medium, which is the proper and natural field of all active expression, and those lower deeps which are no less the proper and natural home of whatever is Divine. This line is inevitably drawn in the region of the subconscious. That which was Divine in Christ was not nakedly exposed to the public gaze; neither was it so entirely withdrawn from outward view as to be wholly sunk and submerged in the darkness of the unconscious; but there was a sort of Jacob's ladder by which the Divine forces stored up below found an outlet, as it were, to the upper air and the common theatre in which the life of mankind is enacted.'[3] We should hardly perhaps have gathered from these words that Dr. Sanday elsewhere speaks of the subliminal as 'that part of the living self which is most beyond our ken.' His words of resolute

[1] P. 145. [2] P. 159. [3] Pp. 165-167.

description seem indeed far removed from the tentative approximations of what is at most half-knowledge.

It is also disconcerting to find him thinking so very spatially of the soul. He tends to insist, for example, upon some particular point or region in human nature in which the indwelling of God can be definitely localised. And if there must be such a point, not discoverable in waking consciousness, the temptation to seek it elsewhere, for choice in the underground chambers of the soul, may well become irresistible. But why should we believe that God's presence invades the soul at some one ascertainable spot ? That would have an unhappy resemblance to the exploded psychological theory according to which the soul exerted influence upon the body also at one definite spot—the pineal gland. It is surely more worthy to conceive of the Divine indwelling as relative to the human spirit as a whole, not entering at some isolated orifice, but taking possession of, because directly appealing to conscience, thought, feeling ? In Sanday's view, the Divine does in the end pervade the whole man ; why should it not do so directly ? If we are Christians, by the Divine we mean the Father, of sovereign power and unlimited love ; we are kin to Him in nature ; our being lies open to His Spirit ; and when theology speaks of the imperishable Divine image in man which confers on him the capacity to be saved, it means not any subconscious department of his nature—at least not primarily—but reason, feeling and will, in virtue of which he

is a person. It has been said that unanswerable questions in philosophy are many of them questions which ought never to have been asked. And the wish to fix some fitting point in soul-life, where, and nowhere else, God enters, must, I am afraid, be repelled on the plain ground that the problem has been stated in an unintelligible form.

(3) The subconscious has been called in to elucidate certain difficulties connected with the religious life of the individual.

The leading case is one rendered famous by James in the ninth and tenth of his Gifford Lectures. He contends, as will be remembered, that regeneration and conversion, particularly when the change is abrupt, occur in the soul's unconscious depths. Processes mature subliminally, then eventuate in results that suddenly pour into the waking mind. To James the discovery of the subliminal was 'the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science,' because it 'revealed to us an entirely unsuspected peculiarity in the constitution of human nature.'[1] This he exemplifies in a characteristic passage: 'A man's conscious wit and will, so far as they strain towards the ideal, are aiming at something only dimly and inaccurately imagined. Yet all the while the forces of mere organic ripening within him are going on towards their own prefigured result, and his conscious strainings are letting loose subconscious allies behind the scenes, which in their way work towards

[1] P. 233.

rearrangements.'[1] Thus a shifting of the man's conscious energy is occasioned, and the lighting up of new crises of emotion is 'partly due to explicitly conscious processes of thought and will, but partly also to the subconscious incubation and maturing of motives deposited by the experiences of life. When ripe, the results hatch out, or burst into flower.'[2] The normal consciousness is liable to incursions from a strongly developed ultra-marginal life; and since the subject cannot trace their origin they 'take for him the form of unaccountable impulses to act or inhibitions of action, of obsessive ideas, or even of hallucinations of sight or hearing.' They may even break out in automatic speaking or writing, unintelligible to the man himself. In cases of conversion, providential leadings, sudden mental cures, mystic experience, inspiration and the like, regarded in a strictly psychological point of view, we encounter phenomena of the same kind with these sensory and motor automatisms; the psychical dynamic resides always in the subconscious. And the difference between sudden and gradual conversion is traceable to the simple fact that 'in the recipient of the more instantaneous grace we have one of these Subjects who are in possession of a large region in which mental work can go on subliminally, and from which invasive experiences, abruptly upsetting the equilibrium of the primary consciousness, may come.'[3]

James, it should be noted, will not offer this as

[1] P. 209. [2] P. 230. [3] P. 237.

an explanation or theory enabling us to dispense with the renewing activity of God. He is satisfied if we take it merely as showing at what point the Divine action on the soul may strike in. 'It is logically conceivable,' he writes, 'that *if there be* higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so *might be* our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them.' But just as it is scientific to interpret all otherwise unaccountable invasive alterations of consciousness as results of the tension of subliminal memories reaching the bursting-point, it is legitimate to explain abrupt religious changes of attitude by motives fermenting in the unseen. It is there that God can best reach us. 'The hubbub of the waking life might close a door which in the dreamy Subliminal might remain ajar.'[1]

Here, then, is a quite distinct if highly metaphorical theory of how saving experiences come. They come primarily and peculiarly through the trans-marginal hinterland of our mental constitution. It is not going too far to say that the soul's centre of gravity, so to speak, is thereby definitely transferred to the subconscious, the relation of which, so far as magnitude is concerned, to the upper waking consciousness has often been imaginatively exhibited by the figure of an iceberg, the larger submerged part of which bears to the above-water part the ratio of possibly eight to one.

Two minor applications of the same hypothesis

[1] P. 242.

have been made in quite recent times. For one thing, it has been used to explain the working of intercessory prayer. Intercession is held to be in its mode of action analogous to telepathy or transference of thought. When I pray for another, I direct a current from my mind to his subconsciousness ; I mobilise force, like a stream of electricity. I resemble a wireless operator tapping his transmitter and sending out invisible waves. If I ask courage for him, it is through me the courage comes ; my will reinforces the subliminal stores of his life, pouring into him bravery and manhood. If, however, this be the truth about intercession, I can only say that I sympathise deeply with people who resent being prayed for, and look upon such prayer as an impertinent invasion of personality. To find that an acquaintance had prayed for me, if this is the *modus operandi* of prayer, would be, if possible, an even more disagreeable surprise than to find that unknown to me he had been paying my debts or writing my lectures.

The theory has also been utilised in the discussion of sacraments. Advocates of a physical or quasi-physical view of grace, conceived as working irrespectively of faith, have been led to argue that the Eucharist takes effect in the deeper subconscious life. Thus it adds invisibly to the spiritual powers of the receiver. Here, too, we may find light on the baptismal regeneration of infants, and the benefits of extreme unction administered to the semi-unconscious dying. Grace finds access to us distinctively through the subliminal door.

The first objection to this line of interpretation as a whole is that it is in fact irrelevant and superfluous. On the real problem it gives no help of any kind. All are agreed that what is ordinarily meant by a religious man is a man who consciously is reverent and devout. He is in fellowship with God. If we ask next *how* he comes to be in fellowship with God, is light afforded by saying that the religious impulse first took a subconscious form? That may state a problem, but no problem is even partially *solved* by it. It is the presence of religion in the man's conscious mind—his faith and feeling—that we are trying to understand; the statement that it broke upwards from subterranean depths is, as a suggestion, like explaining my apprehension of a spoken sentence by urging that I had first heard and understood it subliminally. If Feuerbach argues that my Christian beliefs are illusory, I clearly make his case stronger, not weaker, by tracing those beliefs to subconscious influence. For then it may fairly be urged: Precisely, but if you wish to prove your beliefs true, not only must you be able to exhibit the conscious processes through which those beliefs are mediated, but you must in addition show that such processes are different from those which ordinarily produce error. Thus the defender of Christian faith can gain nothing from the subliminal hypothesis. With validity of belief it has no direct concern. To find a vindication of religion in the fact that its roots are underground, however deep down, is no more convincing than to defend morality by contending

that it springs from deep elemental feelings wholly out of relation to the idea of right or good.

Again, alike from the point of view of psychology and ethics, the notion that the subconscious—whether as storehouse or factory—is superior in quality to the conscious must be repelled as no better than a superstition. On all sound principles of interpretation it is quite the other way, for conscious mental activity, unless words have no meaning, is the more completely developed function of the two, with subliminal process as a subordinate and ancillary condition of the fully conscious, or, in Professor Stout's carefully chosen words, 'an organised system of conditions which have been formed in and through bygone conscious experience.'[1] To deny this, and exalt the subconscious to the highest plane in mental life, is to be guilty of what the New Testament calls a perverse humility. The noblest powers of the soul, faith and love, are represented as being unworthy to receive God, and we are invited to call in aid the more occult and pathological aspects of mind. But we have no real ground for predicating of the unconscious either moral quality or moral activity. At this level no act of judgment can take place, and a moral act which does not involve a judgment is not merely something we cannot understand; it is something we can see to have no meaning of any sort. No wonder James could speak of 'the dreamy Subliminal.'[2] Would any one seriously urge that the unconscious has had the chief share

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, October 1903, p. 47 f. [2] *Varieties*, p. 242.

in producing either great literature or great science ; but if not, why call it higher ? Even if for the moment we grant (what is most doubtful) that it forms a gathering-ground for the reserves of heroism and genius, it must not be forgotten that with perfect impartiality it turns out divine and diabolical ebullitions in equal profusion—the repulsive and disordered medleys of dream-life no less than the fair and noble impulses of unselfish love. In short, it yields to consciousness only the raw material of genuinely moral experience, as in another way external perception does, but all purpose, judgment, or discrimination of values are brought to bear by the conscious self. A sphere of this neutral or non-moral kind is scarcely a fit home for the indwelling or redemptive presence of Deity.

Nor is it to be forgotten that to conceive of God as inhabiting the unconscious by special affinity is implicitly to fix our thought of the Divine. God is then not conscious mind known to or in conscience or reason, but touches us rather beneath the line of clear thought and moral volition. Christians have tended to describe Him as Holy Love in the form of Absolute Personality ; but can such an idea be expressed in terms of the subliminal ? How shall we form the notion of Holy Love as having its proper seat or *locus* in the unconscious ? We are all of us intent on bringing out the perfectly though not exclusively ethical character of the Christian religion, as Jesus founded it, but is there not a wild and perverse ingratitude in this relapse

to primitive animistic ideas by which we again lose what has been gained by the upward march of centuries ? When I read of unseen incubations, of ripe results hatching out, of impulses fermenting in secret as germs multiply in a fever patient's blood, the picture does recall familiar and vivid descriptions of orgiastic proceedings in the religion of Mexico or Central Africa, but it is not in the least akin to the teaching of Jesus Christ. It has no relation, to put it plainly, to the Beatitudes or the concluding words of the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew. We may surely plead, as against all this, that the history of religions, up to Christianity, may be broadly interpreted as the gradual expulsion of the idea that regeneration can be usefully described in terms of nature-process, and that the Gospel finally led the human soul into the full light of day. The New Testament believer is a man who reacts towards God with a trust moral to the core ; his faith is evoked by the specific meaning of Christ ; the object of saving knowledge redeems him, not by initiating subterranean fermentations, but by what it says to thought, to conscience, to faith, to love. This was and is the normal Christian experience. We do not catch religion as we do smallpox ; we are changed by what we see when, in St. Paul's words, it pleases God to reveal His Son to us.

It is no sound objection to the foregoing argument that many Christians are unable to give impressive reasons for their faith. They may be lacking in the power of self-analysis. But although

they fail in detecting or recounting motives, the motives none the less are there ; they *have* good reasons for being Christians rather than Mohammedans or Shintoists. The distinctive promises, inhibitions, incentives, and consolations of this particular faith have been at work. But if the seat or secret of piety be relegated to the unconscious, it of necessity becomes an unethical mystery that has lost attraction for the highest types of manhood. It may, of course, be said that what so far is in debate is not the validity of belief, but only its psychological origin. But in fact much more is at stake. If the true home of religion be the unconscious—if it is there, supremely, that God touches and apprehends us—then an immensely significant question has been decided as to the *nature* of religion : and probably none but a very few will contend that the nature of religion is wholly irrelevant to the problem of its truth.

The subliminal hypothesis, it would appear, has gained in many minds a wholly illegitimate advantage through an impression that it alone does something like justice to the mystery of regeneration. Were this so, no other view could stand against it. But it is not so. On the contrary, it is for the subconscious theory that mystery disappears. According to James, regeneration is a mental process that can be traced and analysed and explained by the investigator. It is possible, by means of circumstantial research and inference, to describe with exactness how a Christian comes into being. And this faith utterly denies.

Creation, of the world or of the new believing life, is a transcendent Divine work, which we can believe in or experience, but never explain. Regeneration, beyond all dispute, is mysterious, but the mystery lies within a man's thought and will ; and to refer it to an inscrutable and non-moral underworld is seriously to obscure, if not dissolve, the very problem on which we are engaged.

Hence we return with some confidence to the fundamental positions of New Testament faith. Christianity is the highest of ethical religions, and for that reason regeneration in the Christian sense is at home in our clearest consciousness ; it is but faith itself viewed as the initiation of a new life. It can never rightly be turned into a natural process in which the mind is purely passive. Those who adopt the subconscious line of interpretation really want, in the proverbial phrase, ' better bread than can be made with wheat.' They want something deeper, richer, more authentic than a conscious change. It is not enough that by the vision of Jesus a man should be led to believe, to pray, to love and will the good. Still we must go behind all that, and put our finger on the conditions. But to go behind experience is impossible. In Lotze's words, it is vain to ask how being is made. Undoubtedly more is implied in the becoming of a Christian than the man's own conscious thoughts, feelings, or volitions ; but this ' more,' so confidently appealed to, is not the subliminal consciousness, but the love of God. In the language of religion, it is the Holy Spirit—not a thing, or an unconscious

system of forces, but the personal influence of the Father revealed in Christ. Your life, writes St. Paul, is hid—not in the abysmal depths of your psychical being, but—with Christ in God. God, writes St. John, not our subliminal self, is greater than our heart. The believer is well aware that by the new life is meant more by far than his fleeting consciousness in the actual present, and that the full reality of what he has become overflows and transcends the movements of idea or emotion which at the moment fill his mind. But this full reality is rooted in and constituted by something quite other than the unconscious, whose character by very definition can never be ascertained ; it is constituted by the new relationship to Himself in which God has set us through Jesus Christ our Lord. The assurance of regeneration lies in the fact that we now know God as Saviour ; or, to put it otherwise, it is a conviction not of sight but faith. 'This birth,' as Luther says, 'is neither seen nor understood : we only believe in it.'

XII *Bergson and Christian Thought*[1]

THERE is a familiar type of apologist whose chief apparent aim is to extract the maximum of capital for religious faith out of each new system of philosophical interpretation, as if Christianity were apt to occupy a position of unstable equilibrium, and must constantly be propped if a crash is to be avoided. The latest utterance of some scientific leader in support of prayer is cited with trembling gratitude, and testimonies to the political or social value of religion are collected ardently. It is not in this interest that we ought to study the ideas of M. Bergson. By this time, after Platonism, Cartesianism, Hegelianism and the rest, it should be fairly clear that Christianity does not at all depend for life or vigour upon any particular philosophy, but can get its characteristic truths expressed quite otherwise than in the categories licensed by the fashionable speculation of the day. The important question is not whether Christianity needs Bergson, but whether in the philosophy of that distinguished thinker leading elements are to be found which reveal a true affinity with fundamental Christian beliefs, and, on the other hand,

[1] *Review and Expositor*, October 1920.

what the graver difficulties are which his general line of argument offers to the Christian mind.

It would not be easy, I think, to overestimate the debt owed to M. Bergson by many contemporaries for intellectual refreshment and stimulus. To some readers it has seemed as if he tore away a veil of illusion interposed between the mind and reality, and opened to them, as by revelation, new insights into the life of things. They cannot forget the first impression left by the perusal of one of his major treatises. The direct intimacy of his thought came home with surprise and delight. 'Everything,' writes an eager disciple, 'everything that you believed you already understood is made new, rejuvenated, as by a morning brightness; and on all sides, in this light of dawn, new intuitions germinate and expand—intuitions felt to be rich in infinite significance, laden and, as it were, drenched with life.'[1] Others speak of the inevitability of his successive movements, as in the best music. We all know how rapidly the literature of the subject has accumulated. A bibliography for the last fifteen years would be a considerable pamphlet. In his recent volume, *Modern Philosophers*, Höffding gives twelve pages to Eucken, but more than seventy to Bergson, with some justice as between the two; and in a technical review like *Mind* the number of papers devoted in recent years to points connected with Bergson has been equally noteworthy. Such facts have, it is true, no immediate bearing on the value of his

[1] Le Roy, *Une nouvelle Philosophie*, p. 5.

contribution to philosophy, but they do indicate, more or less roughly, how successfully and firmly he has caught the attention of our time.

One quality, at any rate, in Bergson's writing has a special interest for the theologian and the preacher, namely, his exquisite power of illustration. These figures and metaphors are in no sense mere outward adornments of his exposition, laid down on the fabric ; like lilies in damask, they are part of the woven thought, and agreeably mediate fine shades of sense. He distinctly teaches that illustration may of itself form an element of true philosophic method, serving as it does to awaken intuitions in us which convey the highest kind of insight. Such intuitions may and do transcend the rigid and ready-made concepts proper to science, by suggesting more supple, mobile, and all but fluid representations which mould themselves on the flowing forms of life. Images are nearer to the truth of things than any conceptual fixture of the understanding. However this may be, Bergson's own use of them is in a class by itself for mastery, so far as modern philosophy is concerned. ' Creative Evolution ' is full of instances. ' Consciousness or supra-consciousness,' he writes in a famous sentence, ' is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter.' [1] We admire, even when we ask doubtfully what the picturesque words can mean. When arguing that our thought in its purely logical form is incapable of presenting the reality of life, or the full

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 275.

meaning of the evolutionary movement out of which thought itself has sprung, he proceeds: 'As well contend that the pebble on the beach displays the form of the wave that brought it there.'[1] Insisting elsewhere on the static quality of intelligence, he declares that 'our perception and thought begin by substituting for the continuity of evolutionary change a series of unchangeable forms which are, turn by turn, caught "on the wing," like the rings at a merry-go-round, which the children unhook with their little sticks as they are passing.'[2] After a point, the aid given by such figures is more or less specious, but, as I have said, Bergson insists keenly on their value for the highest and most penetrating sort of interpretation. 'Many diverse images,' he argues, 'borrowed from very different orders of things may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized.'[3] To think in symbols is, even at the philosophical level, a positive excellence in the thinker. But to press a brilliant metaphor, and still more to base argument upon it, is to invite fallacy; and in reading Bergson we have perpetually to ask ourselves whether he is offering us new ideas or only new pictures.

We ought not to forget that the relation between Bergsonianism and Christian belief, which we are studying, is as yet only partially disclosed. The one point on which Bergson has spoken out is

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 10. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 14.

Theism. In the year 1912, a letter was printed containing an unambiguous reply to those who had charged him with holding an atheistic monism. He there said that he rejected what he was right to reject—doctrines, that is to say, which merely hypostatise the unity either of nature or of knowledge, substantiating one or the other in God as an immobile principle that would really *be* nothing because it would *do* nothing. But he goes on, in one of the most direct theological statements he has so far made : ' The considerations set forth in my *Time and Free Will* result in bringing out clearly the fact of liberty ; those of *Matter and Memory* make palpable, as I hope, the reality of spirit ; those of *Creative Evolution* present creation as a fact. All this obviously yields the idea of a free and creative Maker both of matter and life, whose creative effort is continued in a vital direction by the evolution of species and the construction of human personalities.' In terms, no more wholehearted repudiation of monism and pantheism generally could be imagined.

It is also necessary to recollect that Bergson has never professed to have elaborated a comprehensive philosophy, doing justice to all the varied aspects of experience. He has only worked at special problems suggested by mathematics and natural science. And his theological conclusions still wait on an exploration of moral life. On all such matters, writes Le Roy, Bergson has said nothing up to date ; ' and he will say nothing as long as his method shall not have brought him in

this domain to results as positive in their own way as those of his other works ; for in his view there is no place in philosophy for personal opinions that are nothing more. Hence, without denying anything, he waits and he inquires.'[1] It is still too early to be sure whether his Edinburgh Gifford Lectures, the delivery of which to crowded audiences was interrupted by the war, will trench more definitely on the specific problems of religion. The first course was devoted, in the main, to a searching and delicate analysis of personality.

One or two characteristics of Bergson's work as a whole stand out, in the first place its optimism. That is the natural sign and outcome of his triumphant emphasis on the freshness and impulse of life itself. He paints the future as the scene of human achievement on a scale 'unforeseeable on the basis of any analysis of the past or the present.' At every point he combats the notion of a future compromised by a past that hangs round its neck, in a fatally rigid predestination. Although the energy of our system is running down, a principle has entered which evolves ever higher and higher forms, so that life reveals an ascending movement. To live is to create the new, new in this sense that it marks an increase and enrichment of being, and is a rise in the journey of growing spiritualisation. What we have to ask is, I think, whether this progressive tendency is not too often described in terms reminiscent of Pelagianism, as if the cost of progress could be met by the finite out of its own

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

resources, in particular as if man were eventually cast upon himself for victory. Thus at the close of a chapter on the meaning of evolution, in a passage of thrilling metaphor, we read: 'All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death.'[1] An inspiriting vision, but one that leaves conscience strangely cold.

Much, too, of the attractiveness of Bergson is owing to his dislike of intellectualism. He shows a deep distrust of logic as a calculus for the inner nature of living fact. The experience to which he appeals is larger and richer, yielding an interpretative method ever more finely differentiated, and fitted flexibly, like elastic silk, to the varied outlines of changing problems; it is experience fertilised by the forward movement of being and fertilising it in turn. Thought must be kept free to shift with shifting data, in a vigilant activity or suppleness of attitude that will adjust itself without fatigue to the ever new and unpredictable forms of the real. In the moving continuum of life, the movement cannot be brushed aside as no more than an inconvenience easily suppressed by theoretic diplomacies; it is too essential for that, too constitutive. What we want is less intellect and more intuition. To

[1] *Creative Evolution*, pp. 285-6.

know is, in M. Rageot's phrase, 'to understand in the fashion in which one loves'; and till we have grasped that, reality is for us a sealed book.

It is a lesson which theologians might do well to learn. We need to acquire an instinctive suspicion of closed theories of God and man, the formation of which stopped at a certain date, and which have gained nothing from the labour of the ages. Orthodoxy in the bad sense may be defined as the belief that once in the past—say in the fourth or the sixteenth century—a statement of doctrine was put down by the Church of such a kind as to be thenceafter incapable of improvement. To canonise past forms of thought, however, is, as Bergson reminds us, to forget that all interpretation is the child of time. Truth is analysable in systems as light in colours; but the systems, each and all, have their day and cease to be.

Reference has above been made to M. Bergson's resolute sympathy with the general positions of Theism. He believes, to use his own phrase, in a free, creating God. The speculative effort to refund all mental life, human and divine, into the abstract unity of Spirits as such, in a hypostatised form of *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, is uncongenial to his type of thought. Such a form, really formless, gives us no help in understanding the living, active, concrete self. The 'empty ego,' as he calls it, turns into 'a kind of bottomless receptacle, which belongs no more to Peter than to Paul.'[1] We must begin at the human end and let personality tell its own story,

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 30.

as it reveals itself to intuition. In like manner, he curtly refuses to melt down the Self in a diversity of feelings and impressions. The psychologist's questions are those of a limited and positive science ; whereas to turn psychology straight off into a universal metaphysic, as though the true meaning of personal life could be elicited by analysis from without, is in a philosophical regard one of the unpardonable sins. If we place mental states side by side, seeking the ego in the gaps, it must for ever escape our grasp. We ask and have not, because we ask amiss. 'As well might we deny that the *Iliad* had no meaning, on the ground that we had looked in vain for that meaning in the intervals between the letters of which it is composed.'[1]

It has occasionally been held that M. Bergson's best service to the philosophical defence of faith lies in his destructively critical account of materialism and mechanism as all-embracing theories of experience. And his work in this field does gain much of its value from its quite disinterested and scientific character. He disarms materialism by explaining it. So completely does it fall in with the natural bent of intelligence that even when convinced of its absurdity, 'we are drawn to it as the needle to the magnet.' We are creatures made for action, and our minds apprehend reality most easily in the form, namely matter, in which with least effort we can measure and control it. Intellect petrifies the real lest the never-ending change proceeding in the live fact should baffle

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 27.

knowledge, and our work be robbed of purpose. If it were true that thought could be explained by cerebral events, he argues, knowledge as a whole would be illusory. It is literally unthinkable that a limited series of events in the cells and fibres of the cerebral cortex should produce cognition of a reality unconfined in space and time. As a matter of fact, the brain is an organ subservient to the directing agency of intelligence. It resembles a telephone exchange, and when different calls or stimuli reach it, some go through automatically, while others are checked and sifted before passing into action. Thus perception means hesitation, choice, distinction-making ; and in this work the brain acts as the tool of the mind, not its creator or sustainer.

Similar to this is Bergson's handling of pure mechanism, which he rejects on the ground of its incompetence to explain even events of the type called physical, not to speak of distinctively vital phenomena. The true view of things, he objects, cannot possibly be 'a vast mathematic, a single and closed-in system of relations, imprisoning the whole of reality in a network prepared in advance.' The universe is as much a scene of becoming as of being. Things, when made, are not stereotyped in fixity ; we are continually faced by the new, the promising, the unrepeatable. And for this reason, what is coming can never be budgeted for completely in advance ; the delusion that it can arises out of a native fault of intelligence, which, being adapted solely for the cognition of matter and

hence incapable of grasping movement, apprehends reality in static ways and not in the flowing form of life. Intellect may be described as thought arrested and standardised at an early stage in its development. Its work has come to be, as M. Bergson puts it, to canalise the directions of our activity, with the inevitable result that it persists in transposing even living processes into the key of mechanism. But we may accede to this spirited protest against a 'block-universe' without believing all the evil Bergson has to say of intelligence as such. Quite apart from the question whether intellect and intuition are as far apart in nature as some of his less careful statements might lead us to suppose, his proof of the guilt of intellect in this matter of incurably mechanical thought is astonishing meagre, and in fact rests largely on fancy. I can only express my adherence to the rejoinder made by Professor A. E. Taylor on the whole case. 'The condemnation of the intellect,' he writes, 'is based upon the assumption that because it is a "product of evolution" it can have no function but that of enabling us to find our way about among *things*. This is why geometry, which deals with the "surfaces of solid things," is declared to be its highest achievement, and why it is denied all value for the interpretation of life. But it might reasonably be contended that from the dawn of time men have had to occupy themselves at least as much with reaching a common understanding with one another as with learning their way about among "solid bodies," and that we should therefore

expect an intellect which is a "product of evolution" to be competent to deal with life as well as with the surfaces of solid bodies.' [1]

Bergson's antipathy to mechanism and all its works has, of course, a close bearing on one problem which genuine religion must always canvass afresh. If, with mechanism, novelty be ruled out *ab initio*, then the special kind of novelty ordinarily called 'miracle' is also barred. According to Bergson, however, the world is all novelties together. Does this make Divine preferential action more credible, or less? Apparently it adds somewhat to its intrinsic credibility. For we are now at liberty to regard the universe as open, by its inherent qualities, to the influence of God's operation. The future is not strictly given in and with the present, but is still unwritten; history, we may believe, is no longer the unfolding of a pre-existent scroll, wrapped together before the worlds began to be, but all things are in the hands of God who creates by bringing perpetually to birth what is not simply unforeseen but, from our point of view, unforeseeable. It will then remain to be asked whether, at a definite point in the past, the new fact vouchsafed to men may not have been a Personality in whom were present, to an infinite degree, the redeeming life and love of God.

Life, as we have seen, is for Bergson unceasing creation, and life at its highest growing-point is consciousness. No philosopher, accordingly, could have a deeper or more positive interest in the

[1] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (12th edition), vol. xxxii. p. 94.

affirmation of human freedom as a fact. 'In the animal,' he writes, in a characteristic passage, 'invention is never anything but a variation on the terms of routine. . . . With man, consciousness breaks the chain. In man, and in man alone, it sets itself free. While at the end of the vast spring-board from which it has taken its leap, all the others have stepped downwards, finding the cord stretched too high, man alone has cleared the obstacle.'[1] Action, as we know by living through it, is liberty. In a more familiar vein he elsewhere holds that we are free when our actions issue from our whole personality, and have to it 'that indefinable resemblance that one finds often between the artist and his work.' This does not mean simply, he explains, that freedom is equivalent to dependence on self in the same sense as an effect is dependent on a cause which determines it necessarily; rather, he rejects the notion that a free act is preceded by an equal possibility of two contrary expressions of the self, and, under pressure, would not wholly disown the idea of a *liberum arbitrium*. It is true we share freedom with everything that lives, but in our form of life is registered the highest amount of creative power as yet evolved by the life-impulse.

While, however, Bergson withstands the necessitarian to the face, and will hold no terms with the view that our choices are already made for us before we make them, he none the less warns us emphatically that to theorise freedom is to lose it all over

[1] *Creative Evolution*, pp. 278-9.

again. We illustrate our freedom in acting, but to explain it is impossible. In strictness, it is indefinable. The necessitarian, being an intellectualist, will always perceive freedom in the form of necessity. Even to state the problem is to prejudge it fatally in a deterministic sense; we must be content with asserting the bare fact. This is surely unfair to the author's own argument, which is addressed to intelligence, and by no means lacks force, but it is interestingly like the religious man's intuitive perception that grace and freedom are both at work constitutively in redemption as an experience, and need not be pared down to fit each other, while yet we have no rational insight into the mode of their actual confluence.

Something of the same kind might perhaps be said regarding one other aspect of Bergson's general interpretation. Not merely does he repudiate mechanism; finalism also he puts on trial, and his condemnation of it appears to involve the failure of the whole teleological view of things. His unfavourable verdict is based on the ground, broadly speaking, that to look upon the universe as the working out of a preconceived plan is no better than inverted mechanism, because equally hostile to real novelty. But the *fact* of purpose is, one would think, as hard to deny as the fact of freedom. We can here only proceed by analogy, drawn from our own highest experience, and nothing can be more certain than that the phenomena of life and mind insist on being explained teleologically, that is in terms of activity directed to an end.

Pure mechanism has no place in distinctively human experience ; we have therefore no choice but to transcend it in our interpretations of the world. On the other hand, purpose is central and organic to our experience as moral beings, and is consequently an idea which demands adoption in our attempts to construe the ultimate relations of God and finite existence. By all means let us banish from the Divine purposive action every suggestion of device or contrivance—of a search for, and skilful and laborious adjustment of, means to end. These are features of finite action and must fall away, but the category of End or Purpose is not irretrievably bound up with such defects, nor does it necessarily involve the mechanical realisation of a programme arranged for beforehand.

To take another point, I do not know that M. Bergson has anywhere in print given full expression to his thoughts on immortality ; but he is quoted as saying that ' we have no repugnance in supposing that consciousness will pursue its path beyond this earthly life,' and Professor Wildon Carr recalls the fact that in his presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research during the war, M. Bergson argued that ' the survival of individual personality after death is so probable as to compel belief in the absence of any positive disproof.' [1] In two details his theory of the matter approximates closely to the content of the Christian hope. In the first place, it indicates that after death, as now, soul is unthinkable save as united,

[1] *Philosophy of Change*, p. 8 f.

in concrete life, to that which for lack of a better word we have to call 'body.' And further, it is held that unless the personal histories broken off at death have their continuity preserved and enriched in a life beyond the grave—just as everywhere in a living reality the whole of its past is carried on—the universe would be a scene of sheerly unintelligible waste. We must not, however, hastily conclude that Bergson stands for the full Christian message of immortality. Clearly he regards immortality as no more than very highly probable, which is not quite the same thing as 'the full assurance of faith'; also the basis of his hope is more philosophical than religious in this respect, that it is not rooted, as every Christian conviction must be, in the known character of God.

No idea with which M. Bergson makes us familiar has been more persistently debated than that of 'intuition.' By this term he means sympathetic penetration or insight into the actual flow of life, enabling us to know from the inside, as it were, that which is immediately given. Intuition above all makes it possible to distinguish between the psychological conception of time, or true duration, in which all the moments are qualitatively different, and none can be taken for another, and which forms, as Bergson mysteriously puts it, 'the very stuff of reality,' and on the other hand, the 'Newtonian' or mathematical idea of time, for which it flows equably because it consists of qualitatively identical moments, any one of which can replace any other. In contrast to all this, intellect yields

only a *post mortem* analysis of living fact ; we cannot by means of it, as we can by intuition, ' feel the palpitating of the heart of reality.' It has naturally been objected to this thoroughgoing separation of the two that nothing can be directly given apart from the faint presence of conceptual thought, so that intuition and intellect form no absolute opposition ; that intellect is itself creative ; that intuition as truly as the other has relation to practical life ; and that no one can explain what intuition is except by using terms of an intellectual quality. Apart from these technicalities, however, it may be useful to point out that what Bergson calls intuition exhibits some striking analogies to what in religion is called, more simply, faith. William James had this in view when he said that what Bergson urges on us is ' putting off our proud maturity of mind and becoming again as foolish little children in the eyes of reason.' Faith also is a living and inward knowledge in which we apprehend the supersensible by sympathy, making ourselves one with it submissively in order that we may know. It lays hold upon unseen things beyond the reach of a discursive understanding.

Passing from these valuable hints towards a true philosophical theology, let us in conclusion note what are, from the Christian standpoint, some of the less attractive features of Bergson's thought.

The general impression to be gathered from his main argument concerning life and matter, is that reality is a flux and there is nothing abiding. Time—if we can but think it—is the very stuff of

all that *is*. Bergson may not intend to go all the way with Heraclitus, but at all events the stress he lays on the continuity of change is so exclusive as to obscure the companion and supporting truth that change is significant only by contrast with the permanent. At times, it might almost seem from his language that the intuition of whatever is fluid ought itself to be fluid. The point where this difficulty becomes crucial is the idea of God. On the surface at least he presents the doctrine of a growing Deity. If his leading principles be prolonged into the highest sphere of all, they appear to plunge the Godhead in the stream of change, constituting it not the subject merely but actually the captive or victim of time. In the case of Providence, it looks as if what fell in best with Bergson's mode of thought were the notion of a God restricted in knowledge and moving forward into time, much as we do, in partial ignorance of what lies ahead. This, I am persuaded, is bad philosophy, but no conceivable gain in philosophical impressiveness would make up, to the believer, for the surrender of utter trust in the wise love of God. The Christian mind, it is quite certain, cannot and will not rest in One who is little more than the tide of Life forcing its way up the channels of the future, and feeling more or less blindly for the path of least resistance.

In thus demurring to the idea of a limited Deity, we need pay no sort of homage to a narrow orthodoxy. Too often, as we read Bergson's captivating pages, we feel that in his eagerness to cast down

the idol of Determinism he has gone near to enthroning Chance, or as in the ardour of Irrationalism, he would say, 'radical contingency.' If purpose be absent from the action of the universal Life-force, it is difficult to be sure whether there is any sense whatever in which the world can be described as under Divine control. The point is one at which it seems to me impossible to override the testimony of the religious consciousness, as expressed by all great believers. To conceive of God as an only half-aware impulse is to displace the foundations of Christian faith and joy. Better by far to accept frankly whatever paradox or antinomy the facts may be charged with, asserting creative spontaneity as an irreducible factor in the life we now live, yet claiming openly, with the trust of unnumbered ages, that beneath and over all is the great sovereignty of God. So far from antinomy being an accident in faith, it belongs of necessity to the movement of human thought in its effort to grasp an infinite and eternal object.

It may reasonably be argued, I think, that two important gaps in Bergson's work must be filled up, before a final verdict can be given regarding his ability to aid the Christian theologian. In the first place, we still await his interpretation of history as a specific kind of reality with a value of its own for a complete view of the universe. He has moved on from problems of mathematics to those of biology; the problems of historical life he has hardly as yet touched. Undoubtedly there are points in his exposition to which it would not be

difficult to fasten an evaluation of historical reality which might prove luminous and rewarding. He has, for example, declared himself radically opposed to the Neoplatonic doctrine of the unchanging as the sole real, that which happens being merely 'a shifting image of immobile eternity.' The dictum that 'there is more in the immutable than in the moving,' he meets with a direct negative.[1] We must permit actual life, he insists, to dilate our thought to its own scale. Philosophy is a systematic expansion of the mind, an ever-renewed effort to transcend worn and faded ideas of the past. It is clear how kindly relations might prove to be between such a principle of criticism and positive ideas of Divine revelation which should recognise, if we may put it so, the significance of history for God Himself. Revelation, if it means anything, means that the Eternal can accomplish what is new, that He can put forth never-exhausted resources for the redemption of His blinded and dying children, that man is not for ever fated to pour all possible experience into pre-existing and imperfect moulds. But if, according to the new philosophy, the past forms no standard for present or future, because each moment brings something new, something that never was before, there is room in the cosmos for God's personal self-bestowal in Jesus, who rises beyond all that in the light of a purely empirical inspection of humanity might have antecedently seemed possible.

We may fairly conjecture that in the main

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 64.

M. Bergson's neglect of history is traceable to the fact that he has not as yet taken up the problems of morality. And it might be well if occasionally he were to remind his disciples that any interpretation of human life which leaves moral experience out of account can be no more than a fragment. To say, with one of them, that 'there is only a difference of degree and not of kind between an atom of hydrogen and a human soul' is to use language containing so small an ingredient of truth as to be virtually indistinguishable from nonsense. We shall not greatly repair the errors of materialism, blind as it must be to specifically ethical facts, by attempting to state the moral truth concerning self and neighbour and their relations to each other in the categories of biology. Most likely M. Bergson would not deny this : I have not made the point with any intention of refuting him, but simply to explain why the conception of history in the proper sense has so far no place in his thought. To the Christian thinker at all events it is clear that we should not fare much better if the distinctively human values were dissolved in biological instead of physical terms ; a man dies all the same whether he is hanged or shot. From the point of view of either science it is impossible to appreciate the meaning of God, or redemption, or faith and hope and love.

If, with Professor Wildon Carr, we take the master principle of Bergson's philosophy to be the truth 'that the fundamental reality is life, that life is an original movement generating an order

the inverse of itself,' [1] we might for a single moment be listening to Hegel. The two thinkers agree in offering us the idea of advance through contradiction, or the distinction of inseparables ; for both, the pulse of thought beats with the pulse of things only when we envisage life as a development proceeding through division to a truer and more comprehensive unity. It may be that if Bergson should create a school, its members, like those of the Hegelian school in last century, may divide before long into two wings, a Right and Left, one more friendly to Christian faith, the other passing into acute hostility.

[1] *Philosophy of Change*, pp. 183-5.

XIII *A Philosopher's Theology*[1]

It is likely that for the next few years the Gifford Lectures of Professor Pringle-Pattison, lately issued with the attractive title, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*, will captivate and inform the mind of the theologian. The book promises to take its place alongside of Professor James Ward's lectures on the same foundation, more particularly his first series, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, as a lofty and impressive statement of the Idealism which is most in harmony with the fundamental convictions of religious faith, and, in its final outcome, betrays a definite sympathy with Christianity itself. Those who are engaged in revising their ultimate beliefs in the light of present perplexities may well give attention to so helpful and practised an argument. If they desire, by clearing their minds of dead matter, to understand what is spiritually relevant in modern speculation, and to impart width and freedom to apologetic thought and even to the systematic exposition of vital religious truth, they could do nothing better than digest carefully the system of philosophical theology, as we may call it, which Professor

[1] *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy.* By A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, LL.D., D.C.L. The following critical notice appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, December 1917.

Pringle-Pattison has set forth with so much insight and lucidity and, it need not be added, such unusual literary charm.

No one will desire to claim the author as the exponent or defender of any formal Dogmatic, making philosophy the handmaid of theology ; and the office, in all probability, is one which he would hardly care to accept. But at all events there is inspiration for Christian thought in the study of a metaphysician who invariably speaks nobly of the soul—its nature, its affinities, its destiny. We are not oppressed, as we read, by the idealistic materialism or higher mechanism into which, as numerous examples prove, Hegelians of a certain type so easily lapse. Nor are we vexed by a superfluity of external logic—that calculus so pathetically unequal to the greater issues ; the logic which allows of no reply yet produces no conviction. Those who, like the present writer, claim Professor Pringle-Pattison as an admired and beloved teacher, are aware that his argument is wont to move in the ample air of sympathy and reason. And in this new volume the position of antagonists is uniformly criticised not from without but, so to say, in the light of its own ideal. The philosopher's task is conceived on broad and comprehensive lines. 'Philosophy,' we are told, 'is just the attempt of the reason to realise the co-ordination of the different aspects of experience, and thereby to express, as far as may be, the nature of the total fact.'[1] But the counterstroke, ensuring fair play

[1] P. 57.

for faith, comes with an exactness and force that leave nothing to be desired. 'It is to the moral and religious man himself that we must go, not to the philosopher weaving theories about him, if we are to understand his experience aright. The religious man's account of his experience may be overlaid with accretions and survivals of primitive custom and belief; and on these accessories philosophical criticism and historical research have their legitimate work to do. But the fundamental presuppositions of any experience must be accepted from the experience itself: they may be explained, but not explained away.'[1] With this may be taken an interesting passage, at a later point, which suggests that 'the paradox of religion may be truer than the dilemma, the "Either-or," of the logical understanding.'[2] The frequency with which Professor Pringle-Pattison has drawn upon the poets is further proof that justice will be done to the place of the higher imagination in all religious thought.

As we turn the pages, one passage after another is found to give expression to the religious point of view with striking truth and freshness. The basal principle of all spiritual belief, or, as it is put, 'the absolute judgment of value,' is stated as being 'the conviction of the essential greatness of man and the infinite nature of the values revealed in his life.'[3] Whatever else the great doctrine of the Incarnation may mean, it at least means that 'in the conditions of the highest human life we have access, as nowhere else, to the inmost nature of the divine.'[4]

[1] P. 252. [2] P. 338. [3] P. 236. [4] P. 157.

This position, that man at his noblest is the index of God, may be described as Professor Pringle-Pattison's fundamental article of faith. He accepts teleology as cosmic principle, not in the sense of the traditional argument from design, but as meaning that the idea of purpose, when examined, becomes the idea of a systematic and intelligible whole, thus tending to pass into that of value and satisfaction. In the closing lecture there is given a deeply moving statement of the truth that the Divine must be interpreted specifically by that which we feel to be profoundest in our own life, viz., vicarious suffering. From this angle, it appears, 'the ultimate conception of God is not that of a pre-existent Creator but, as it is for religion, that of the eternal Redeemer of the world.' Or, as it is put immediately before, the object of faith turns out to be, 'no God, or Absolute, existing in solitary bliss or perfection, but a God who lives in the perpetual giving of himself, who shares the life of his finite creatures, bearing in and with them the whole burden of their finitude, their sinful wanderings and sorrows, and the suffering without which they cannot be made perfect.'[1] Behind all this stands as metaphysical background an argument which on the whole forms the main theme of the first half of the book, and which, with the possible exception of a chapter entitled 'Time and Eternity,' is perhaps the most masterly and sustained example of purely philosophic reasoning it contains; the argued view, namely, that 'man is organic to the

[1] P. 411.

world, and conversely the world is organic to man, completing itself in him, and manifestly coming to life and expression in his experience.'[1] Things are to be interpreted by mind, not mind by things.

The purpose of this notice, however, is not so much expository as critical. And the criticism bears on a single issue. We have just seen at how impressive a conclusion Professor Pringle-Pattison arrives with regard to the fundamental structure of reality, which means the being and nature of God. It is of interest to ask whether the course of his general argument is throughout consistent with the ethical Theism in which it culminates; and this is the one matter we shall treat of. Christian thinkers who are much surer of their faith than they ever can be of its philosophical vindication are, I feel, justified in putting these two questions. In the first place, how far is Professor Pringle-Pattison's view of God and the Absolute capable of being combined with belief in the divine Fatherhood? In the second, can his statements as to the relations of Reality and the time-process be harmonised with faith in divine Revelation? We shall find that in both cases his thought exhibits two distinct and even disparate strains, one of which can, whereas the other I am bound to think cannot, be reconciled with what we may broadly call the faith of the New Testament.

To begin with the question of the Absolute, an anthology of passages might be formed in which God and the Absolute are directly equated with one

[1] P. 235.

another, while in turn each is equated with the All. Thus the author writes : ' It is impossible to get away from the conception of a *natura rerum*, whether we call it Nature, the Absolute, or God ' ;[1] and a page later, ' We cannot, as philosophers, rest in any principle of explanation short of that which we name the Absolute or God.'[2] If along with this we take a sentence to the effect that time must be conceived of as an aspect of facts *within* the universe, ' not, as it were, a containing element in which the Absolute or the All exists,'[3] we appear to be confronted by that sheer identification of God, the Absolute, and the All which is a familiar phenomenon in the history of speculation. The three are different names for one reality. From a passing phrase on p. 154—' by universe I mean here the All of existence '—it may be gathered that Universe is a possible fourth term denoting the same all-inclusive Fact. As it is put in a citation from Hegel : ' The truth is the Whole, the End plus the process of its becoming.' William James is censured for distinguishing sharply between God and the Absolute and for denying that God is the All.

We need have no scruple in owning that James's formulation of this distinction is in various ways defective. It is in no way necessary, if we decline to identify God and the universe, to fly to the extreme of holding that God is, as James puts it, ' one of the eaches,' an individual inside the scheme of things, ' finite, either in power or knowledge, or both at once,' ' being in time and working out a

[1] P. 155. [2] P. 156. [3] P. 367.

history just like ourselves.' This, or something like it, was hypothetically adumbrated in the posthumous *Essays on Religion* of John Stuart Mill; but it has never appealed to Christian thought on the large scale. Living faith is not interested in an Author of Nature who is, as a character in one of Hume's dialogues puts it, 'finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind.'

The truth is, 'finite' and 'infinite,' as employed in philosophical theology, are terms much in need of scrutiny. The crucial question seems to be: Does infinite mean all-inclusive? Clearly we can conceive a reality, say the series of prime numbers, which is infinite in the sense that it has no assignable limit, while yet to call it all-inclusive is absurd. On the other hand, if infinite does mean all-inclusive with what justice can it be applied to a Self, divine or human, known to be of moral character? When theology says that God is omnipotent, not as being able to do anything whatsoever, but because He can do that which He wills, it exhibits some real sense of this difficulty. It roundly denies, for instance, that omnipotence by itself can resolve moral questions: God cannot force a man to be compassionate. Yet to hold that limitations of this kind, arising out of moral and intellectual necessities, compel us to call God 'finite' may be more misleading by far than the worst abuses of 'infinite' or 'unconditioned.'

But to return. Professor Pringle-Pattison's tendency thus far to identify God with the All of things is further exemplified by his explicit rejection

of the idea of man's one-sided dependence upon God. The dependence, he insists, is strictly mutual. The one exists in the other and through the other. 'Most people,' he writes, 'would probably be willing to admit this mediated existence in the case of man, but they might feel it akin to sacrilege to make the same assertion of God. And yet, if our metaphysic is, as it professes to be, an analysis of experience, the implication is strictly reciprocal.'[1] This may possibly mean, as other passages suggest, that Divine love cannot but reveal itself in a process of self-communication to finite spirits; and in that case, unquestionably, there is much to be said in its favour. But if it means that God needs man for existence just as man needs God—their relation of interdependence being analogous to that of concave and convex—it is a conclusion in which religion cannot acquiesce. He may not have seen the whole truth, but in defining religion as the feeling of utter dependence Schleiermacher laid his finger on experimental fact. Even the verdict of ontology is doubtful, if, as Professor Pringle-Pattison inclines to say, the argument *a contingentia mundi* is 'the essential argument of metaphysic.'[2] For within this very argument the finite ranks as contingent but the infinite as necessary, which points to a real difference on the two sides of the contrast. If over against the abiding and harmonious Reality stand dispersed and mutable lives, it is hard to see how in both cases the existence of the one is necessarily *and*

[1] P. 254. [2] P. 251.

in the same sense mediated by the other. Emanation, as was felt long ago, is a lower idea than free creation, just as substance is a lower category than subject.

We need not labour the point that this equation of God with the All or Universe of things is out of touch with the Theism, or to put it more exactly, the ethical monotheism embodied in or presupposed by Christianity. In the religion of the Bible, God loves the world and rules it, but it is not He. What is of interest is to observe that Professor Pringle-Pattison himself fails, or it may be declines, to carry the identification through consistently to the end, inasmuch as in the later portions of his fascinating exposition he commits himself to various findings which imply a distinction between God and world not unlike that insisted on by familiar Christian thought. The first step towards this modification of view may perhaps be found in an interesting passage at the beginning of Lecture xx. There, after a brief allusion to Dr. Rashdall's plea for a distinction between God and the Absolute as commented on by Professor Ward, he observes that 'in this sense there is no difficulty in accepting Professor Ward's definition of the Absolute as God-and-the-World, regarded as the single eternal Fact.'[1] Such a form of words, it may fairly be said, amounts to an incipient admission that after all God and the All are not equivalents, so that, without betraying any weak distaste for Pantheism, we may stand for the coexistence of God and selves within the sphere of reality.

[1] P. 388.

We are, moreover, encouraged to do so by the author's contentions at an earlier stage in the argument. Thus his view of human personality is emphatically positive. 'I took the self,' he writes regarding a former statement of his own, 'and I still take it, as the apex of the principle of individuation by which the world exists.'[1] As we might expect he disowns the lower Immanence, which 'reduces both God and man to meaningless terms,' God becoming only a collective name for a world of *things* which simply exist.[2] He is not tempted, as Professor Bosanquet has been, to treat the individual as a negligible feature of the world, and he strongly insists that the finite spirit is a 'member,' rather than in Professor Bosanquet's favourite phrase a mere 'element,' of the Absolute. Its mode of being, in short, is substantive, not purely adjectival. And he argues for the conservation and permanence of the individual as such. His strictures upon Professor Bosanquet's 'too exclusive monism' show plainly that for him the Absolute is a self *in sensu eminenti*, that 'what is called the absolute experience possesses the centrality of focalised unity which is the essential characteristic'[3] of self-conscious life as we know it. Not the least striking declaration is to the effect that 'there is nothing more characteristic of the religious attitude than the sense of a Divine Companion, whose perfect comprehension is the pledge of a sympathy as perfect, a sympathy to which we appeal with confidence even where we might

[1] P. 390. [2] P. 253. [3] P. 271.

hesitate in regard to those nearest to us and most dear.' [1]

God, then, is a Self, but He is not a Universal Self of such a nature that in Him other selves coincide or merge ; He is not 'an identical Subject which thinks in all thinkers.' To put it plainly, there is not ultimately one and only one experience, all-inclusive and complete. The world in which finite spirits participate is no more appearance, it is metaphysically real. As it is expressed : 'The otherness of the finite is not a logical transparency, but brings with it a real difference.' [2] The creation of a soul resembles the addition of a child to the family. 'In whatever sense or in whatever way our thoughts and actions form part of the divine experience, we know that it is in a sense which does not prevent them from being ours.' [3] This is a primary certitude. Nature, too, is the home of contingency, as being crowded with phenomena which, at their face value and in detail, cannot be brought within the scope of any rational or beneficent purpose. Nay more ; the existence of any finite world at all 'seems to involve the clash of individualities which tend to go their own way and seek their own ends.' [4] And recalling as we must a former paragraph in which Nature and God figure, virtually, as interchangeable terms, it is with a start of surprise that we come upon these words : 'Nature is more than a training-school of the moral virtues in the specific sense ; it is an element, savage and dangerous, into which the human being

[1] P. 269. [2] P. 415. [3] P. 391. [4] P. 415.

is thrown to show what stuff he is made of.'[1] The Divine purpose is worked out in this foreign element and in spite of it; through its mercilessness and casualty we gain the opportunity of receiving life and power from the omnipotence of atoning love which unweariedly creates good out of evil.

These are deep and true thoughts, but it requires some violence to adjust them to earlier statements of Absolutism, in which God, the Absolute, and the All take rank as varying names for one fact. They obviously involve the rejection of the concept of the Absolute as merely the spectator of the world-drama—the needle-eye, so to speak, through which all relational threads must pass. God's interest in the world, rather, is such that He may be described as eternally redeeming it at His own cost. There is 'a life of God, in which, besides the effort and the pain, He tastes, we must believe, the joy of victory won.'[2] This is surely very much less Absolutism than Christian Theism in its loftiest and most convincing form. If, as a Christian may well hold, the ultimate reality of things and the ultimate reality of consciousness are one, and this one reality is Spirit, yet room must still be made, within this general position, for the supreme faith that God is our Father and our Friend. The course of the argument we have reviewed is a fresh proof that religion has no cause to strike its flag to the monism which denies that God and the individual may be in union, yet all the while distinct.

The second problem, to which we now turn, is

[1] P. 416. [2] P. 412.

whether the conclusions to which Professor Pringle-Pattison has been led with regard to Reality and the time-process are consonant with Christian faith in Revelation as a definite self-manifesting of God in history. Here also, it would seem, there are two distinguishable strains of thought. According to one of these, events within the time-series have a substantial value as a significant index of Ultimate Reality ; according to the other, Reality proper is timeless, unchanging, eternally complete, and on that account possesses at best only a negative connexion with the incidents of human life.

'Nothing,' the author observes, 'is perhaps more remarkable, if we consider the intimacy and the omnipresence of the *experience* of change, than the general refusal of speculative and, it may be added, of religious thought, to regard this universal characteristic of human experience as an ultimate predicate of reality.'[1] He quotes Mr. Bradley to the effect that 'in any case there is no history or progress in the Absolute' ; a view which he himself endorses later by the statement that, from an ultimate metaphysical standpoint, 'our conclusion must be that progress is predicable only of the part which can interact with other parts, and, in such interaction, has the nature of the whole to draw upon. It is unintelligible as applied to the whole, and the temporal view of things cannot therefore be ultimate.'[2] Similarly, at a previous stage he had argued that no new fact can be 'a sheer addition to the life of the universe' ; the Absolute does

[1] P. 343. [2] P. 383.

not grow from less to more, as if there could be any 'inconceivable birth of something out of nothing.' 'The novelty,' as it is aptly expressed, 'is like that of entering a new room in the Interpreter's House, not of building out the universe into "the intense inane." It is a novelty, as it appears to us, in the time-process, but how can it be qualitatively new *in ordine ad universum*? How can anything come into being unless it is founded in the nature of things—that is, unless it eternally is?'[1]

Plainly the issue here is whether to say that an event is founded in the nature of things is the precise equivalent of saying that it eternally is. It is surely difficult to hold that the two are quite the same. By forcibly identifying them we mask the very problem that troubles us—the emergence of real differences within a continuity of process. Again, it is a misfortune of this absolutist point of view that it can only be stated in terms that imply its erroneousness. We can no more escape from temporal forms of thinking than we can escape from our shadow. Not only so, but the massive argument Professor Pringle-Pattison has built up for positive and organic relationships between Infinite and finite creates an additional obstacle for the view which denies to the novelty of our experiences any fresh value, any reality of contribution to the Absolute Life. We are confronted by the difficult idea of a Whole which is vitally related to its parts, but which yet does not change although they change uninterruptedly. It might rather be intelligibly

[1] P. 155.

urged, as by Lotze, that it is only through the self-adjusting change of the Whole that any change of the parts is thinkable.

Does the religious consciousness, then, accept the idea of a changing God ? It, of course, repudiates whole-heartedly the notion of a God who is morally alterable, who is more loving or holy at one time than another. None the less it believes that the very thought of a historical revelation, willed and effected by the Father, implies that a potential relation of God to man, as of man to God, is now become actual, and that in this sense change, activity, experience, is predicable of Deity. The Unchangeable One acts. The antinomy is insoluble, perhaps, but does philosophy in the least escape it ? How can it, except by taking flight to sheer Acosmism ? The enigma is not one which can be conjured away by the doctrine of degrees of reality, important and enlightening as that doctrine may be, and is, at a variety of points. For the whole problem starts up again and looks you in the face once you have conceded that temporal change has any degree of reality whatever. In what sense, for example, can it be maintained that the Divine life is essentially a ' process of self-communication,' [1] if simultaneously we are forbidden to predicate change of the Absolute ? We should further have to ask whether, in these high latitudes, process can be conceived which is *only* process, and not in some sense progress. It is indeed very probable that Professor James and M. Bergson have not spoken

[1] P. 315.

wisdom's last word on these trying problems ; but the problems are most urgent, and are not, it must be said, adequately dealt with by the dubious conclusion on the one hand that Reality is not essentially timeless, yet on the other that Time is finally unreal.

We are confirmed in these obstinate questionings by the discovery that in Professor Pringle-Pattison's exposition there gradually emerges, to become dominant before the end, a second current of thought according to which the relation of God or the Absolute to the facts of mundane experience, 'the moving world of real events,' is of an intensely positive character. As it is expressed : 'The temporal process is not simply non-existent from the Absolute point of view ; it is not a mere illusion, any more than the existence of the finite world. . . . The existence of that world must represent a necessity of the divine nature and must possess a value for the divine experience.' [1] What is going on is nothing less than a progressive revelation. We must therefore reject the aloofness of the Absolute as represented in one aspect of Mr. Bradley's philosophy, for the Absolute is no eternally perfect spectator of the play, but the doer and sufferer in the world's life. It is vain to conceive of God as 'a pre-existent, self-centred, and absolutely self-sufficient Being eternally realising a bliss ineffable in the contemplation of his own perfection.' [2] He is rather One who gives himself, with an omnipotence constituted by 'the all-

[1] P. 363. [2] P. 399.

compelling power of goodness and love to enlighten the grossest darkness and melt the hardest heart.'[1] This larger and, it can scarcely be doubted, profounder view[2] comes to a height in the final lecture, especially in those impressive paragraphs above referred to, where God is set forth as the eternal Redeemer of the world.

Even this grander phase of the writer's thought, however, might have had freer course but for the haunting, if partial, influence of the primary assumption that the time-sequence has, in the last resort, no relation to the Absolute Life save an external one. All that happens in the world stands outside the perfect absolute source of the perfections successively revealed, in the sense, from the final standpoint, that although it is their source, their coming to be is nothing new; the revealed divine Self is unchanged, unaffected, by the phenomenal revelation. 'The universe is there, once for all, in its nature as it is. The "Being is" of Parmenides is, in this reference, the last word that can be said about it.'[3] The materials of the whole controversy may perhaps be found, in their most concentrated form, within the following sentences: 'Moral progress might seem the most plausible case of such real novelty through the creation of fresh values. But, as we have seen, the verdict of the moral consciousness on its own advance

[1] P. 411.

[2] A view which implies that the time-process is organic to the eternal, and an integral part of the Whole.

[3] P. 381.

emphatically repudiates the idea suggested that it is actually *creating* these values and raising the moral level of the universe.'[1] It is indeed true that the moral consciousness, reflecting on progress, does not regard itself as having created out of nothing whatever goodness anywhere exists ; but this in no way alters the fact that we know there is *more* goodness in the universe when we have done right than when we have done wrong. Surely, that is to say, there is real truth, not to be speculatively cancelled, in saying that every good act does raise the moral level of the universe in so far as a self, or selves, now realise values not before present. Further, if the moral level of the universe cannot as such be altered, to what real end are the doing and suffering of the Absolute in and through the experience of man ?

One other point remains. The Christian theologian, I imagine, will be apt to urge that in Professor Pringle-Pattison's finely-marshalled argument an inadequate place has been given to the conception of history, as an ethical and creative form of reality. To the time-process, indeed, reference is made abundantly, but that process is on the whole a fact of nature more than of moving human life ; it is the history or evolution of things more than the advancing story of moral personality, of the generations entering, through social mediation, into a continuously richer experience of Divine self-bestowal. Time, as the author suggests, may be transcended in teleological explanation or in an

[1] P. 382.

artistic whole ; it is not so transcended in the moral experience of the race as fructified and ennobled by pioneer souls—by religious leaders especially, who, conceiving God predominantly as ethical will, regard moral conduct as the service of God and the prophet's own moral fervour as Divine inspiration. History is here of the very fibre of experience. God's relation to man, it appears to Christian thought, has not merely been revealed in the past ; it somehow has been developed ; for a moral relationship, as it grows, becomes increasingly reciprocal, and religion is in essence a fellowship. The case for Christianity is that in the fruitful soil of history we find such a basis and pledge of this fellowship as no scientific analysis of nature, no philosophical interpretation of the constitution of man, can ever yield. The planets still circle in the orbits they travelled in when Chaldean astronomers first traced their goings ; history is the sphere of growth, increase, the opening of new and untrodden paths. It is simple fact to say that for millions the relationship of God and man has been transformed through the advent of Jesus Christ. He meets us in the domain of historic movement—a different *type* of reality from nature—in which we ourselves live ; there He accredits Himself as the crucial fact by which the being and the purpose of the living God are decisively revealed.

I am well aware that this is not the philosophical tradition. Speculative thought has never been inclined to take the time-sequence too seriously, or give a real importance to change. As Emerson

puts it: 'We must not seek advantage from another; the fountain of all good is in ourselves. . . . Be lord of a day, through wisdom and justice, and you can put up your history-books.' But this is to flout all that we know of man as he was and as he is. It is through history that he has received all the greater content of life. If we are to interpret this fact adequately we shall have to pass even beyond Bergson, who has substituted for the Kantian philosophy of mechanical science a philosophy inspired by biology. That is much, but it is far from being enough. The philosophy of historical experience, which the future must bring, is as yet only in its first beginnings.

XIV *Christianity and Absolute Idealism*[1]

THE aim of these pages is to examine the relationships, whether of affinity or variance, that obtain between the Christian Message and Absolutism in philosophy. What we shall be discussing, to be exact, is not Idealism simply, but Idealism of the definitely Absolutist kind. All Christian thinkers are idealist in the sense that they conceive the meaning of things to be ultimately spiritual : they hold, in other words, that things are explained by mind, not mind by things. But by adding the epithet ' Absolute,' you alter the case. Absolutism is the claim to interpret everything that exists by a single ultimate speculative principle, to find a place satisfying to reason for literally every element of the world—even sin—in one coherent and completely intelligible system. It is Idealism in so far as it views all reality as mental : it is Absolute Idealism because the synthetic unity or self-consistent spiritual process constitutive of the universe is a logical network comprehensive of all real particulars, and the Absolute simply *is* this logical structure of being. In virtue of the Absolute, defined as an all-inclusive and internally systematic experience, the world is a world.

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, April 1921.

The clearest instance of the philosophy now described is, of course, Hegelianism, that great and inspiring speculative effort which has survived nearly a hundred years. Spinoza and von Hartmann exemplify the same fundamental tendencies, but it is best to keep the Hegelian metaphysic most prominently before our minds throughout this discussion. Hegel is the Absolutist *par excellence*. No other philosopher displays so openly the intellectual attitude that gives Absolute Idealism a place by itself, in its strength and also in what a Christian must take leave to think its weakness.

Hegel was far from indifferent to religion. In the first sketch of his system that has been preserved, he placed at the climax of the spiritual ascent not philosophy but religion. And even in his later phase he considered, as Croce says, 'that the Christian idea of the Trinity, attenuated or rendered void by Protestant rationalism, should find its refuge and its true meaning in the new philosophy.'[1] But no one has ever been quite sure what Hegel believed about God. His school divided up, as all men know, into two wings, a Right and a Left. The Right found in him a personal Theism, and sought to interpret sympathetically many of the Christian doctrines; not treating the Gospel merely as a convenient illustration of speculative truths, but giving it an important place in the final synthesis. The Left wing opposed all ideas of transcendence, and

[1] *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*, Eng. trans., p. 48 f.

scouted the very conception of a personal God as puerile mythology. It ended in Feuerbach with something hardly distinguishable from gross materialism. Which side had best understood the leader ? It is nearly impossible to say. There is nothing unreasonable in the belief that both developed principles native to Hegelianism as such—principles fundamentally hostile to each other, though at first the hostility was concealed, or partially smoothed out, by the master's prodigious dialectic skill. Ambiguity, however, on vital points will suit Christian faith as ill as open antagonism.

To scoff at Hegel would obviously be both ignorant and foolish. He is far too great a philosopher to be read with anything but respect, and we have probably not yet heard the last of the great fertile principles which underlie his universal system. A good example is his principle of the dialectic unity of opposites. Surely the idea that opposites are really moments in a living process of thought —moments which in separation negate each other but are preserved in a richer combination—will always strike men as very profound, very fruitful, very original. It is, as one has said, ' a most simple principle, and so obvious that it deserves to be placed among those symbolised by the egg of Christopher Columbus. The opposites are not illusion, neither is unity illusion. The opposites are opposed to each other, but they are not opposed to unity. For true and concrete unity is nothing but the unity, or synthesis, of opposites. It is not immobility, it is movement. It is not fixity,

but development. . . . Only thus does philosophic truth correspond to poetic truth, and the pulse of thought beat with the pulse of things.'[1] I believe we can see that life constantly illustrates this. We have all felt, for example, that experience reveals three conditions of intellectual attitude: first, the naïve satisfaction of utter ignorance; next the conflict, even misery, of the first stages of understanding; third, the full fruition of a complete and systematic knowledge. Friendship, too, often exhibits the same zigzag advance as it were from Yes to No, then on to Nevertheless. First comes the impulsive choice of a new comrade, with all its unripe intimacies; then the temporary recoil of hesitation; finally the profound fellowship of spirit that when tried is not found wanting. Life is largely built on such triadic lines. The human mind frequently moves just so: how many sermons fall into three divisions!

'It is impossible,' writes Bishop Westcott, 'to study any single system of worship throughout the world, without being struck with the peculiar persistence of the triple number.' Hegel, it seems, laid his hand upon a cardinal truth about life and thought as a development. The same fact is met with in the field of organic evolution, where greater differentiation of function proves itself to be the means to deeper integration and more concentrated unity, a unity in which nothing that was valuable in the lower stage of life is ultimately sacrificed, in spite of changes in form. The conflict of oppo-

[1] Croce, *op. cit.*, p. 19 f,

sites is itself, so to speak, a union : as two wrestlers, in order to wrestle, grapple and cling together. The strength of things lies in the strain or tension through which the less advanced life passes upwards into the more mature, and the richer existence absorbs the less complete into itself, transforming it into its own flesh and blood.

In a particularly interesting work, already quoted, *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel,* Croce rightly complains that Hegel fell away into a false use of this principle, this thought of progress through the conflict of opposites. For he applied it to the case of distinct orders of reality. For instance, he posits the family as thesis in one triad, civil society as antithesis, and the State as synthesis. In another triad, chosen this time from the sphere of absolute spirit, art is thesis, religion antithesis, philosophy the synthesis of both. But who can believe that religion is the negation of art, or that art and religion are two abstractions which attain truth only in philosophy, their superior ? This is dialectic in the wrong place. Its worst effect probably is to canonise error, for error and darkness are thereby constituted the necessary and creative foil to the light of truth, with their own essential and inevitable place in the progress of intelligence. Also—and this most concerns us now—instead of recognising the independent stability of religion, Hegel quite mistakenly classed it as an imaginative and more or less imperfect form of metaphysics.

A further point at which the Idealism inspired

by Hegel has brought aid to Christian thinking, and that without drawback, is its unsparing and conclusive refutation of Materialism. The menace of Materialism to-day has for the moment abated, more especially in educated circles, but while the world stands the old battle will assuredly have to be fought again from time to time. Materialism on the surface is so simple, so self-evident to the average sense-imprisoned mind, that its attraction will always be very strong. Hence we owe an immense debt to the type of philosophy which in the nineteenth century most effectively routed the materialistic hypothesis, and did so with permanently useful weapons. It was from writers like T. H. Green in England, or Royce in America, that leading Christian writers drew their artillery and munitions for the fight. On idealistic lines they pointed out that if everything is to be construed in terms of matter, you must know matter first ; but matter, as it appears in experience, cannot be the source of that which is itself a condition of its appearance. What Materialism has invariably done is to take the emptiest and least significant conception we have—that of bare unqualified physical being, than which nothing could be more unlike real experience—and turn it into the very staple of a comprehensive theory of the universe. But, as a witty French writer puts it, if there were nothing but matter, there would be no Materialism. The one fact which has given Materialism its otherwise inexplicable fascination for the less instructed modern mind is, we can scarcely doubt,

its wholly illegitimate alliance with the doctrine of Evolution.

We may perhaps summarise our debt to the Hegelian type of thought by saying that it has taught us, in a variety of spheres, the need for a never-ceasing revision of our categories. Nothing in idealistic work has been more positively luminous than its convincing demonstration of the purely relative value of the concepts employed in the special sciences, coupled with the proof that these concepts may yet be wholly unsuited to express the nature of spiritual experience as a whole. Each science, as experts agree, must have its scope defined by certain initial assumptions, and what does not fall under these assumptions must be treated by the science in question as non-existent. Idealism conceived of as just such a criticism of categories has much to teach the student of theology. To discover the limited range and degree of truth belonging to a given type of concept is often the first step towards relieving the tension, of which we hear so much, between science and religion. We discover, for instance, that if Natural Science is forbidden by its very definition to acknowledge the reality of the supernatural, yet the view of things properly characteristic of Natural Science is so partial and departmental that faith is altogether within its rights, at its own higher and more adequate standpoint, in giving the supernatural action of God a central place. On idealistic principles we are entitled to say that physicists must apply their categories with the limitations which leave room for history and

freedom, and historians must apply theirs with the limitations which leave room for the presence and operation of God in modes transcending nature. This inspection of concepts, this doctrine of the degrees of truth and reality, is, when properly understood, unreservedly on the side of the angels, and must on no account be confused with a sceptical view of knowledge. What it proves is that while no human conceptions are more than approximations to an absolutely correct reading of fact, some are nearer to the complete truth than others, and possess real validity as far as they go. Because no concept is more than an approach to truth, it does not follow that all are equally wide of the mark. The physicist, the psychologist, the moralist, the thoughtful believer, all of them pass judgments upon the meaning of human life, and each in his measure gives pronouncements upon aspects of the whole. No judgment is final ; none, that is, expresses a perfectly complete and harmonious view, but it cannot so far be assumed that there is anything in science or philosophy to discredit the Christian's conviction that his insight into the heart of things goes deeper than any of the others.

The last feature of definite affinity on which I will touch is the partial assistance which Christianity has received from Absolute Idealism in the effort to prove the reasonableness of religion. Hegel relegated faith to a lower level of thought, but in his own way he did allow that the religious man is thinking. We may welcome this, even if it be without enthusiasm ; for many of us must have

observed with distaste the recent growth of a tendency to describe poetry, art, and especially religion as representing what is called the 'irrational' side of human experience. What people mean to bring out by that word is presumably the *alogical* character of religion; it is not a purely intellectual function of the human spirit but rests on and revolves round the idea of value, and expresses as well as satisfies the practical and emotional nature. But, as the unhappy term 'irrational' might have suggested, the result too often is to erect the distinction between faith and reason into an absolute antagonism, and to speak as if the movement of reflective analysis and critical reconstruction were necessarily hostile to intuitive belief. In that case, we might well fear to cross-examine our creed, which must lose its power over the mind as soon as we are able to distinguish poetry from prose. Nothing could be more unlike the genius of Christianity, with its brave plea that faith lives best in the light, and that the wholesome action of reason is a friend to the Gospel, not a foe. We may therefore suitably accept any guidance Idealism may proffer in elucidating the rational implications of religious belief, and its admission, condescending as it no doubt often has been, that the symbolic character of religious ideas need not disqualify them as apprehensions of reality.

I must now turn to the other and more critical aspect of our problem, and give if I can good grounds for the opinion that Christianity can never, without real loss, be theorised in terms of Absolute Idealism,

and that while the defensive side of Idealism may be temporarily accepted, any alliance between the two movements must be precarious. The ancient controversy of the Church with Gnosticism may still teach the lesson that the Christian message cannot fitly be presented under the guise of a speculative system without endangering what is for religion the deeper truth, that faith, not intellectual power, is the organ of spiritual knowledge. Love is higher than the gifts of dialectic, and we can never forget the words of Christ according to which the supreme things are hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes. It is possible, I think, to formulate succinctly one or two reasons why all efforts on the part of Absolutism to capture or transform Christianity ought to be received with vigilant suspicion.

(1) It is absolutist doctrine that for ultimate truth you must resort to philosophy, not religion. Mr. F. H. Bradley, while exhibiting in his latest utterances a demeanour rather more friendly to religion than his *Appearance and Reality* might have led his readers to anticipate, and while conceding that the affirmations of the religious consciousness have their own rights, and are not simply to be snuffed out by the metaphysician, still argues that if you want to know the last knowable truth about the universe it is to the philosopher you must apply. Religious experience is a pictorial and as it were kindergarten form of apprehension, of grasping truth which in inward essence is accessible solely to speculative thought. Faith's insight is decidedly

inferior to that of the ontologist, and to be fully entitled to our faith we must furnish it with a metaphysical vindication.

Any one can see that on these terms spiritual insight is aristocratically, not democratically, conceived. The highest truth can never thus be the meat and drink of humanity ; inevitably it becomes the luxury of a small coterie of self-conscious intellectuals. We must drop out of religion, as unessential superstitions, 'just the very points which are the secret of the driving power of those bodies of ideas which master men's imaginations and succeed in directing their lives.' To suit the metaphysician's taste, the childish and imperfect truths of religion have all of them to be so completely transfigured and aetherialised before they are fit to figure in the one true system, that they cease to be recognisable. Once start with the principle that the religious man is a man who unconsciously is trying to be a metaphysician and has failed, and you stand on the inclined plane of something very like disdain for the common herd. The believer, it is tacitly suggested, would like to have been an Hegelian if he could. One is reminded of Aristotle's not very felicitous dictum that woman is Nature's failure to make a man.

Those, then, are not far wrong who fix upon over-intellectualism as the Absolutist's besetting weakness. On strictly Hegelian presuppositions the universe is an eternally complete whole of thought-determinations, and the nearest approach you can logically make to an acknowledgment of human

personality is to say that in the individual Reality thinks itself. The objectionable consequences of this attitude, it has been well said, 'appear in the refusal to regard any mode of consciousness, or direction of conscious activity, as having any worth, unless it can be reduced to purely intellectual terms —to a case of the cognitive process or a state of thought.' We exist supremely in order to be thinkers: the ideal set before us is to interpret experience systematically; and it is forgotten, or at least the argument proceeds as if it were forgotten, that Beauty, Goodness, and Holiness are as real in their hold upon our complete nature as Truth itself. In protesting against this, we do not appeal from the head to the heart; we appeal from a one-sided estimate of man as called chiefly to the work of intellectual interpretation, to man as a social member of a community in which science, art, morality, and religion have each its fruitful and appointed place. Increasingly one feels that a purely logical construction of things, like that of Absolute Idealism, is quite irrelevant and non-committal in regard to those elements of human life that make it best worth living. Other aspects of experience than the logical either are ignored, or, as with Mr. Bosanquet, they are subsumed under a conception of logic so enlarged as to become unintelligibly vague.

It is, however, a wholly unjustifiable assumption on the part of Speculative Rationalism that there exists only one right method by which Reality can be apprehended. We may quote Mr. Bradley, the

high-priest of Absolutism, for the opinion that there is no sin which is metaphysically less pardonable than the metaphysician's own besetting sin of treating his special way of regarding the Absolute as the only legitimate one. We must stand then for the richer variety of experience, and hold fast to our right to breathe with our own lungs.

One exceptionally important consequence of the Absolutist's faith in dialectic as the proper instrument of interpretation is his cavalier treatment of historic fact. Hegel himself notoriously dealt with history by this method of higher deduction in a spirit so arbitrary, and with such inaccurate results, that many of his followers have abandoned the claim of the Dialectic to be more than a systematised account of the progress of the individual mind from rudimentary to full-grown knowledge. But even so they have not done justice to facts. The events of the time-series, indeed, have never counted for very much with philosophy travelling by 'the high priori road.' Since what is usually regarded as progressive change is in Absolutist eyes nothing more than the expansion of what has been there from the start, not at all the production of the genuinely new, we can understand that historic facts should rank as at best only third-class matter. A nearly irresistible inclination is felt to explain away the rise of great men as but the outcome of environment, and to minimise their creative power. There is a similar tendency to consider all actual events as the only real possibilities. The Absolute can have no history, therefore the time-processes

of growth and development in human lives are no more than surface ripples on the profoundly immutable ocean of being. Hegel's own words could hardly be more explicit.

> 'It is not the Universal Idea,' he writes, 'which commits itself to opposition and conflict, or puts itself in jeopardy ; rather it keeps itself in the background, uninjured and unassailed. This we may call the craft of Reason, that it suffers the passions of men to work on its behalf ; hence it is that through which reason gives itself existence that bears the loss and suffers injury. The particular for the most part is overshadowed by the Universal, individuals are given over to sacrifice. Tribute has to be paid to existence and transience, but it is paid not out of the Idea itself, but out of the passions of individuals.'

If we recollect that the Universal Idea is Hegel's name for God, we have suggested in this curiously frank passage a view of God's relationship to the conflict and agony of the world which is in startling contrast to that of Scripture. And I wonder if in our heart of hearts any of us deems it a nobler or sublimer view than that which is indicated alike by the Old Testament and the New. 'In all their affliction He was afflicted' ; 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.'

In any case, we can see that the irrationality and unrighteousness present in human life are here

being treated, on principle, as ultimately negligible. Everywhere one finds an improper simplification of awkward facts. It is a much too short and easy way to say with Hegel that the universal principle is everything, the facts only its illustration ; that the world-explaining principle can be learnt from the self-analysis of pure reason ; that human history has reached its culmination in Europe ; that in history Asia, not to speak of America, has no part ; that monarchy is the final form of human government ; that the net outcome of history can now be formulated. The flood of increasing knowledge has long since destroyed such illusions. Men are now more modest. Mr. Bradley once propounded, as the test of a philosophical doctrine, this question : 'Is the truth of this theory consistent with the fact that I know it to be true ?' And people have naturally asked how it could be known that the future would add nothing of consequence to the achievement of the past, especially in view of the fact that we still understand very imperfectly what the past has meant. History, in short, can no longer be conceived of as like a circle, the whole circumference of which is calculable provided any segment of it is given : it rather is like a parabola, one branch sweeping in from incomprehensible distances in bygone time, flowing past the present, then out once more in the branch that travels off into the boundless future. Temporal succession can never be completely rationalised : yet out of its fulness there speak to us certain voices of lofty worth, and one voice of supreme

worth, at which involuntarily the soul bows down in unconditional surrender.

Plainly enough, however, a philosophy constructed on Absolutist lines is unlikely to concede to Jesus Christ the place He holds in the religious estimate of life. By definition Absolutism has no love for unique personalities. The principle of redemption may be beyond criticism, not so any one supposed Redeemer. In Strauss's famous words : ' It is not the fashion of the Idea to pour its fulness in a single life.' Instead, the Idea demands a multiplicity of co-ordinate and supplementary instances for ever rising up anew only to pass away in an infinite and uniform succession. A persistent fondness for historic facts, we are told, has always been the ruin of Christianity. Set the Christ-idea in place of the historic Jesus, and at last the religious soul will have true liberty. But the only answer we can make to all this is to deny it. And we do deny it unhesitatingly as an *a priori* dogma scouted by the specifically Christian experience. It is vain to prescribe beforehand what human life must be, vain to say that Christ shall not be supreme. We cannot understand Nature except we are willing to accept her surprises equally with her commonplace ; and one way to make history perfectly unintelligible is to lay down in advance rigid dogmatic rules as to what Reality can contain and what it cannot. For history is no scene of self-identical persistent types occupying unchangeable relations ; at every turn what confronts us is the incessant uprising of the new and unpredictable. If this

be so, there is no antecedent ground for denying that at one particular juncture in the past there may have emerged the Saviour of the world. Speculative prejudices about relativity and uniformity have a way of vanishing in Jesus' presence, for no man who, as he kneels before the Cross, has seen into the heart of things and been overpowered by the supreme moral fact of the universe will ever let himself be deterred by Absolutist vetoes from receiving the impression of Jesus as God's final word to man.

(2) This leads on to the second chief count of the indictment, which is that the Absolutist conception of God is not really Christian. Lord Balfour writes, in his Gifford Lectures :

> 'By God I mean something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in solution. I mean a God whom men can love, a God to whom men pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, howsoever conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created.' [1]

We need not now canvass the question, which Dr. Ward has called the chief problem of the philosophy of the twentieth century, of the relation between God and the Absolute. It is a point on which even Absolutists differ. In either case, as it seems to me,

[1] *Theism and Humanism*, p. 21.

their formulation of the problem inevitably comes into collision with the Christian faith. If God be less than the Absolute, then He tends to become one finite though larger Spirit amongst others, behind and above whom stands the greater Absolute, as the Greek Nemesis stood above Olympus. If God and the Absolute are just two names for one entity, then this entity is just the Whole viewed as a systematic structure, including lunacy, cancer, and the 'white slave' traffic, no less than saintliness, heroism, and sunshine as ingredients in its own perfection. The second, I should judge without much hesitation, is the proper, orthodox Absolutism; and I do not myself see that any such conception affords an atmosphere in which Christian faith can live.

It is true, Absolutist criticism has done extremely effective work in protesting against a Deistic view of God. Also there is a priceless truth of which Pantheism is a grave but not wholly inexplicable distortion. None the less, to believe in God is a good deal more than to realise the existence of a principle of unity in the whole of things. So to define faith is to expel the vivid interest of genuinely religious experience and leave in its place a mere *caput mortuum* of abstraction, or a purely dialectical process which is as far removed from life as the conceptions of pure mathematics. We are all alive to the danger and falsity of ultra-anthropomorphic ideas of God. We have all at some time or other said to our neighbour, or to ourselves: Your thoughts of God are too human. We are agreed

that the ascription of personality to God is manifestly inadequate to the full reality we are striving to express. And yet the affirmation of the Divine personality is infinitely more true than its denial; nay more, attempts to form and use the conception of supra-personality invariably lapse, by some fatal weakness, to an infra-personal level.

The final touchstone for religion is prayer. It can easily be applied to our problem. I cannot pray, it has been pointed out, to a Being who is Mind in general without being a Mind. I cannot pray to One who is the aggregate of all individual minds. I cannot pray to a logical 'Universal' inherent in all things but without consciousness, without purpose, without ethical characteristics of any kind. I cannot pray to a higher 'Unity' which underlies Mind and Matter without being exactly either; or to the abstract rationality of things: or to a general name for the laws of nature. The God of actually operative, contagious and missionary religious faith is One who thinks and feels and wills and loves; He consciously affirms moral ends, He aids us in the conflict, His mind towards us is specifically a mind of grace. If it be true, as an eminent idealist has written, that 'a man's religion, if it is genuine, contains the summed-up and concentrated meaning of his whole life,' Christians are false to their whole experience if they resign themselves to a depersonalised Absolute, or go about brandishing the term 'immanence' as a panacea for all possible philosophical complaints. For let it be noted, such an immanent

Absolute makes no difference anywhere or to anything. It cannot truthfully be said to do more than initial the successive pages of the world's story as they are thrown off. No single concrete fact ever will or can become other than it is because the Absolute exists. Heroism and tragedy alike are a meaningless phantasmagoria. In sober truth the world is a finished world, and always has been ; its lines and angles immutably determined from the first. Ultimately there are no real possibilities, no crises, no deliverances or escapes. The one right temper befitting the case is resignation ; but faith and hope and love must be stoically renounced.

In the last resort, then, we have as Christians to decide whether we deem it truer to describe God, with Absolutism, as the all-inclusive Unity, the universal needle-eye through which pass and re-pass all threads of cosmic relation, or, with Jesus Christ, as the Father whose character is essential Holy Love —a Spirit for spirits, and the proper object of worship and of trust. In this matter there is no escape from a great act of choice. We have to say which description affords the truest and most satisfying interpretation of the experience we have actually had. In answering this question, in dealing with those difficulties which undoubtedly afflict the notion of Divine Personality, let us not forget that to speak of an impersonal Mind is to use terms devoid of meaning, which correspond to nothing in our experience ; that we must interpret the highest Reality of all by the loftiest conception within our reach ; that all efforts to transcend personality

are vain ; and that the God with whom we have to do has been revealed to Christ. Dr. Rashdall's words seem to be convincing : 'If we habitually think of God as being like Christ, and of Christ as being like God, we shall practically find it impossible not to think of Him as a person.'

(3) The last point deserving of attention is the Absolutist view of ourselves. Students of the history of human thought are aware that throughout the past the conceptions of God and man, always, have varied together. It is therefore not surprising that in the course of reading Absolutist books we find that man is somehow being dissolved in a complex of his relationships to other men and the world of objects. He turns into a phase or predicate of the Absolute, robbed of all independence over against the non-conscious substratum of things. The Absolute indeed is an individual, but there is no other. So the uniqueness and unrepeatability of each human life perpetually slips through our fingers, and we are left with a mere assemblage of universal qualities. It seems to be forgotten that life flouts all such attempts to blur the finite centres of conscious being in a fog of relationships, or reduce them to the mere incidents or accidents of a world-process. My experiences hang together in a way they do not hang together with the experiences of any other self. True, I may be aware of another man's experience ; but I do not enjoy it as I do my own. I can look upon my thoughts and feelings from within as no one else can, even were I willing that he should. There

is, in short, a distinctive self-identity and self-possession of the individual, of which not even the poorest outcast can be deprived. Against this it is vain to appeal to the mystic's union with God. For there, so long as the experience is typically Christian, the soul is not lost in God, but remains numerically distinguishable from Deity—the two-ness as essential to the experience as the unity. Love and friendship not merely presuppose a duality within the one-ness ; they retain it to the end. Otherwise the reflection of the lover in the beloved would cease, and, ceasing, would ring the knell of love itself.

This view of the human individual brings up decisively what is perhaps, from the religious standpoint, the most complete of Absolutism's failures—namely, its sophistical manipulation of moral evil. When we find a man endeavouring to treat sin dialectically, mischief is on foot. Two things indeed dialectic can do with sin : it can represent it as essential or as unreal, both unsatisfactory devices ; one thing it can never do—supply a cure, whereby the evil is actually overcome in the very sphere in which it has appeared. I imagine that the genuinely Absolutist tradition is to construe sin as necessary rather than as unreal, though in point of fact the difference is unimportant. Naturally a philosophy that prefers aesthetic to moral values can have no scruple in arguing that the Universe needs sin in order to display the excellences latent within it. Our business therefore is not to overcome sin but to explain it by discovering

its function ; it will then appear as an element which ought to be just there where it is, and whose absence makes the whole so far defective. One cannot but smile at the solemn impressiveness with which, often, this solution is proclaimed. At the start we are told, with a flourish of trumpets, that the problem of moral evil, which has from the beginning baffled the best and wisest of mankind, is at long last going to be reasoned out to a conclusion ; then the notional apparatus is set in movement and presently out comes evil as good ! Under cover of logic used like a conjurer's handkerchief, the article in dispute is changed. For obviously there would be no problem of any kind if evil were in a true sense good. We *define* evil as that which is opposed to good, not as conducive to good ; emphatically not as an element in a system made better by its presence. To protest that there is surely a soul of goodness in things evil is quite unavailing ; the phrase betrays a lingering sense that this same soul has wrapped about it a body or integument of wrong that leaves the problem exactly in the old place. Moreover, to represent evil as unreal or a mere negative is futile. The wisdom of the world has sometimes compared evil to a vacuum ; but a vacuum is positive at all events in the sense that if you put your head into it, you will presently be a dead man.

The truth is, Absolutism has a direct interest in glorifying the world as it is. Hegel, says a recent admiring critic, hates that virtue which is always at strife with the course of things ; he is the great

enemy of sensitive souls who agitate for betterment! He detests the idea of 'ought,' with its censure of the actual, the impotent ideal which always ought to be and never is—that divine discontentment, as we should say, which will not confess that the reality is adequate to the ideal. Could there be a more cynical justification of the *status quo*; a more reasoned adoration of 'the great God of things as they are'? Could the summons to reform be more sublimely repudiated? And yet, whatever high-sounding words may be used, the thing eventually is as ethically disreputable as Pope's 'Whatever is, is right.' Indeed, there is not much to choose between the absentee Creator of eighteenth-century Deism, smiling aimlessly upon the world at a safe distance, and this Absolute of latter-day speculation, so submerged in the cosmic multiplicity that the actual course of events may confidently be reckoned an adequate and complete expression of His will. Absolutism in fact is *as a theory* superior to sin, ignores it, will not touch the burden of it with its little finger, and occasionally adds to this a curious patronage of those who passionately follow Jesus Christ in agonising to redeem the stained lives of men.

Now religion which has been learnt from the Bible cannot away with this. The faith of Scripture dissociates God from sin as cause only that it may bring Him the closer to sinners as Redeemer. If Jehovah is represented as saying indignantly to the transgressor: 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' there is a later utter-

ance which declares that ' He is not ashamed to call us brethren.' According to the New Testament the one right way to deal with sin is to repent of it, while the great motive impelling to repentance is the glad consciousness that God too has dealt with sin, and still deals—that He has taken its burden and put it away in love by the sacrifice of Himself. There is no pathway from Absolutist indifference to the tragic moral gravity of such a faith. If the Absolute never takes a side but stands remote and uncommitted, the God on whom Christians lay hold is One who lifts the load from His blinded and dying children, and in all their affliction is Himself afflicted.

How does this bear upon Immortality ? It is not to be thought of that with the ideas of God and man just indicated, Absolutism could have anything inspiring to say on such a theme. The truth is that in idealistic discussions of Immortality there is seldom or never to be found an allusion to fellowship with God. Now to the mind that has learnt its religion from Scripture, to speak of immortality and ignore communion with the Father, as a friendship begun here, which death itself cannot touch, is but waste of time. To the true-blue Absolutist, however, the soul at best is the victim of a tragic doom. Once justice has been denied to the finite individual, no description of the world as ' a vale of soul-making ' alters the fact that the soul, as a soul, is made to be annihilated. Ties will be severed once for all : activities laden with present good will cease. Consolations, it is true, there are.

Is not man possessor even now of an 'eternal life' regarding which the Fourth Gospel has said so much that is profound and convincing? Doubtless; but the eternal life of which the Absolutist speaks is a purely logical affair, in type resembling the timeless validity of mathematical theorems. True life within the whole, we are assured, is out of time. The world-sustaining Universal has a distinct place for each in the system of determinations; from each it draws a unique contribution to the totality of the world. We are even told that the values incarnated in each soul are superior to death; only—and the reserve is a grave one—no reason can be given for believing that these values are necessarily attached to persisting individuals. How values can be preserved except in the experience of permanent individual souls is a problem of which I confess I have never seen any Absolutist treatment that sounded even plausible; the point is one on which Varisco's argument is conclusive. We rise from perusal of a typical Absolutist discussion of immortality with a feeling that it has elaborately missed the point in which the interest of faith is most profound.[1] 'Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,'—the wonder of this is hid from their eyes.

Hence our fundamental quarrel with Absolutism lies in this, that in its interpretation of the facts of

[1] After quoting the words of Jesus, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,' Edward Caird adds, 'And perhaps this is the one argument for immortality to which much weight can be attached' (*Evolution of Theology*, i. p. 218 f.).

life it wholly declines to be selective. Its universality is so much without discrimination that eventually it presents us with a world of which we can only say, in the words of the humorous rhymester, 'Where every one is somebody, there no one 's anybody.' This explains the irrelevance of so much Absolutist writing to the religious problems that matter most. Can a book from this school be named that even raises the problems of the forgiveness of sins or the Fatherhood of God ? Whereas the Christian faith is selective on principle : it derives its thought of God not from the facts of the world taken in the large, but fundamentally and decisively from the unique revelation afforded in Jesus Christ. This lack of distinction between the great and small, the moral issues and the logical, the personal and impersonal, renders Absolutism at a series of cardinal points nearly useless for the purpose of ethical faith. For, as Professor Barton Perry of Harvard has remarked :

> 'Religious hope and fear, like all hope and fear, are discriminating. They issue from the love of some things and the dread of other things. The believer looks to God for a boon, knowing well the sweet from the bitter. Hence the assurance that things are one, orderly, coherent, systematic ; even the assurance that they are thought or willed to be so, leaves him unmoved. He must know incomparably more before, in his religious perplexity, he knows anything.'

One plain moral to be drawn from the foregoing argument, if sound, is that Christianity will not easily consent to live under the protectorate of any speculative metaphysic. 'All things are lawful for me,' wrote the Apostle, 'but I will not be brought under the power of any.' The thoughtful believer cannot indeed have too much philosophy, or use it too diligently in clearing up his own mind and leading others to a full consciousness of the implications of their faith. But if he has learnt wisely from the past, he will endeavour to stand fast in the liberty, critical no less than spiritual, wherewith Christ has made him free.

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